LETTERS

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

EDMUND BURKE,

OCCASIONED BY HIS

REFLECTIONS

ON THE

REVOLUTION in FRANCE, &c.

THE SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.L.D. F.R.S.

AC. IMP. PETROP. R. PARIS. HOLM. TAURIN. ITAL. HARLEM. AUREL. MED. PARIS. CANTAB. AMERIC. ET PHILAD. SOC.

Eloquence may exiſt without a proportionable degree of wiſdom.

Mr. Burke's Reflections, p. 245.

Steady independent minds, when they have an object of ſo ſerious a concern to mankind, as GOVERNMENT, under their contemplation, will diſdain to aſſume the part of *ſatyriſts* and *declaimers*.

Ibid. p. 187.

BIRMINGHAM,

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THE

PREFACE.

OF the numerous readers, and anſwerers, of Mr. Burke's long expected *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, the attention of the greater part will be chiefly drawn to thoſe paſſages which more immediately relate to the *civil conſtitution* of that kingdom. Theſe I have not neglected. But, what I have more particularly replied to, is what he has advanced on *civil eſtabliſhments of religion*, which makes no ſmall figure in his performance, and which appears to be a ſubject not generally underſtood.

It is with very ſenſible regret that I find Mr. Burke and myſelf on the two oppoſite ſides of any important queſtion, and eſpecially that I muſt now no longer claſs him among the friends of what I deem to be

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the cauſe of liberty, *civil* or *religious*, after having, in a pleaſing occaſional intercourſe of many years, conſidered him in this reſpectable light. In the courſe of his public life, he has been greatly befriended by the Diſſenters, many of whom were enthuſiaſtically attached to him; and we always imagined that he was one on whom we could depend, eſpecially as he ſpoke in our favour in the buſineſs of ſubſcription, and he made a common cauſe with us in zealouſly patronizing the liberty of America.

That an avowed friend of the American revolution ſhould be an enemy to that of the French, which aroſe from the ſame general principles, and in a great meaſure ſprung from it, is to me unaccountable. Nor is it much leſs difficult to conceive how any perſon, who has had America in his eye ſo long as Mr. Burke muſt neceſſarily have contemplated it, could be ſo impreſſed, as he appears to be, in favour of *eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments*. That country he ſees to flouriſh

riſh as much as any other in the annals of hiſtory, without any civil eſtabliſhment of religion at all. There he muſt ſee the civil government goes on very well without it. It neither ſtands in need of religion, nor does religion ſtand in need of it. For America is ſo far from being a country of atheiſts and unbelievers, that there is, I doubt not, a ſtronger general ſenſe of religion there than in any other part of the world.

In America alſo, and indeed in every other part of the known world, except the ſouthern part of this particular iſland, Mr. Burke ſees all civil offices open to perſons of all religious perſuaſions without diſtinction, and without any inconvenience having been known to ariſe from it; and yet here he joins with a bigotted clergy, in rigorouſly confining them to the members of the eſtabliſhed church. But even *this* is not ſo extraordinary as his not ſcrupling to claſs all the enemies of eſtabliſhments with *cheats* and *hypocrites*, as if our opinions were ſo

palpably abſurd, that no honeſt man could poſſibly entertain them.

Some are diſpoſed to aſcribe this change in Mr. Burke's views and politics, to his reſentment of the treatment of the *coalition* by the Diſſenters. And certainly ſo *ſudden* an union of Mr. Burke and his friends with Lord North, with whom they had been in a ſtate of violent oppoſition during the whole of the American war, did fill the Diſſenters, but not the Diſſenters only (for the ſhock affected the greater part of the nation) with horror. In this it is poſſible they might have judged wrong, liſtening to no *reaſon* againſt the effect of the firſt unfavourable *impreſſion*; but they certainly acted from the beſt principles, an attachment to liberty, virtue, and conſiſtency; and they lamented the fall of Mr. Burke, as that of a friend and a brother.

However, the queſtion before the reader, is not the propriety or impropriety of any particular man's conduct, but the wiſdom of

of great meaſures of government; as whether it be right, and wiſe, to connect the buſineſs of *religion* with that of the *ſtate*, in the manner in which it is done in this country, and whether the French nation is juſtifiable in their attempts to change their arbitrary form of government for another which they deem to be more favourable to their intereſts and natural rights.

The queſtion alſo with reſpect to *them*, is not whether they have taken the very beſt methods poſſible to gain their end, but whether the thing itſelf was worth their aiming at, and whether they have been thoſe *very great fools* that Mr. Burke makes them to be. After all, mankind in general will judge by the event. If they ſucceed in eſtabliſhing a free government, they will be applauded for their *judgment*, as well as for the *ſpirit* that they have ſhewn; and if they fail, they will be condemned for their precipitancy and folly. Thus every ſucceſsful revolt is termed a revolution, and every unſucceſsful one a rebellion.

If the principles that Mr. Burke now advances (though it is by no means with perfect conſiſtency) be admitted, mankind are always to be governed as they have been governed, without any enquiry into the *nature*, or *origin*, of their governments. The *choice of the people* is not to be conſidered, and though their happineſs is aukwardly enough made by him the end of government; yet, having no choice, they are not to be the judges of what is for their good. On theſe principles, the *church*, or the *ſtate*, once eſtabliſhed, muſt for ever remain the ſame. This is evidently the real ſcope of Mr. Burke's pamphlet, the principles of it being, in fact, no other than thoſe of *paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance*, peculiar to the Tories and the friends of arbitrary power, ſuch as were echoed from the pulpits of all the high church party, in the reigns of the Stuarts, and of Queen Anne. Let them, however, be produced again, and let us ſee in what manner they will be treated by the good ſenſe and ſpirit of Engliſhmen at the preſent day.

After

After the firſt part of theſe letters relating more immediately to the French Revolution were printed, I had an opportunity of ſeeing the *Memoir of the Comte De Lally Tollendal*, of whoſe account of the tranſaction of the ſixth of October, Mr. Burke has availed himſelf ſo much, p. 109, &c. calling him "one of the moſt honeſt, in-"telligent, and eloquent members of the "National Aſſembly." I have particularly compared his account of this Aſſembly, with that of Mr. Burke, p. 24, where he ſays, "I conſider this Aſſembly as nothing "elſe than a voluntary aſſociation of men "who have availed themſelves of circum-"ſtances to ſeize upon the power of the "ſtate, and that they have not the ſanction, "and authority, of the character under "which they firſt met."

Mr. Tollendal's ideas were certainly very different from theſe of Mr. Burke. For, ſpeaking of his being choſen a member of the Aſſembly, he ſays, p. 5, "it was, with-"out doubt, a great occaſion, and a great

"work

" work, to concur in the regeneration of " France, in founding liberty there, and in " creating laws and manners*!" What, then, has the National Aſſembly done, or attempted to do, more than this, which Mr. Tollendal clearly conceived to have been the deſign of their meeting? Though he thought proper to leave this Aſſembly, yet he acknowledges, p. 45, that " the " majority of the perſons who compoſed " it, had the pureſt intentions†;" and he ſpeaks in the higheſt terms of approbation concerning the *declaration of Rights*, which was their firſt Act. After making ſome objections reſpecting the form, more than the ſubſtance, he ſays, p. 125, " it " contains all the great principles which " are the guards of ſocieties, which main-

* C'étoit, ſans doute, une aſſez grande occaſion; c'étoit un aſſez grand travail, que de concourir à régénérer la France, à y fondre la liberté, & à y créer des lois & des mœurs.

† Une très petite portion d'individus pourroit rendre inutiles les intentiones pures de la majorité.

" tain

" tain the rights of man, and of his dig-
" nity, and which ſecure his tranquility
" and happineſs*." And theſe are thoſe *rights of men* which Mr. Burke treats with ſo much ridicule.

In order to form a judgment whether the National Aſſembly had actually exceeded their commiſſion, or had undertaken more than was required of them, I alſo looked into the King of France's *circular letter for the convocation of the States at Verſailles*, dated January 24, 1789, as it is contained in the *New Annual Regiſter*, for 1789, p. 111. According to it, this Aſſembly was convened " to eſtabliſh a ſteady, con-
" ſtant, and invariable order in every part
" of government, that intereſted the hap-

* Il eſt cependant vrai de dire, que tous les grandes principes, tous ces principes tutélaires des ſociétés, conſervateurs des droits de l'homme, & de ſa dignité, protecteurs de ſon repos & de ſon bonheur, y ſont renfermés. Je crois que cette declaration pourra être applaudie, le jour où les troubles qui s'élevoient, pendant que nous la rédigions, ſeront calmés.

" pineſs

" pineſs of the people, and the proſperity " of the kingdom; that an effectual re- " medy might be applied to the diſorders " of the ſtate, and that abuſes of every kind " might be reformed and prevented, by good " and ſolid means, proper to inſure a per- " manency of the public happineſs." And laſtly, it is ſaid to be " for every thing that " might concern the preſent and future " wants of the ſtate."

Again, in the *King's letter to the Preſident of the Aſſembly*, dated May 28, 1789, he ſays, "I cannot ſee without pain the " National Aſſembly, which I have called " together, to be concerned with me in the " new regulation of the kingdom, ſunk " into inaction; which if continued, would " cauſe all the hopes which I have formed " for the happineſs of my people, and the " benefit of the ſtate to prove abortive."

Certainly, therefore, in the opinion of the King, as well as in that of the whole nation, there was a want of a total reform in the

the conſtitution of the French government, and this reform was expected from the National Aſſembly. This is the very thing which they are endeavouring to effect, and in which they have made conſiderable progreſs. What they have done gives the greateſt pleaſure to the friends of univerſal liberty, though unfortunately it gives pain to Mr. Burke, and ſome others.

THE

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LETTERS

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

EDMUND BURKE.

LETTER I.

Of the general Principles of the French Revolution.

DEAR SIR,

I Do not wonder that the late revolution in the French government has excited *your* attention, and that of a great part of the nation. "It is," as you juſtly ſay, p. 11, "all circumſtances taken "together, the moſt aſtoniſhing that has hitherto "happened in the world." It is, therefore, a moſt intereſting object both to philoſophical and practical politicians. It behoves them particularly to conſider the principles on which it has been made, that if the conduct of the leaders in the buſineſs has

been right, and if the ſcheme promiſes to be beneficial to the country, it may, as far as their ſituations are ſimilar, be imitated in other countries; and that, if their conduct has been wrong, and the reſult of it unpromiſing, the example may ſerve to deter others from any attempt of the like kind.

But though there is nothing extraordinary in this revolution having excited ſo much of your *attention*, I am ſurpriſed that you ſhould be ſo much *alarmed* and *diſturbed* at it. You appear to me not to be ſufficiently cool to enter into this ſerious diſcuſſion. Your imagination is evidently heated, and your ideas confuſed. The objects before you do not appear in their proper ſhapes and colours; and, without denying them, you loſe ſight of the great and the leading principles, on which all juſt governments are founded, principles which I imagined had been long ſettled, and univerſally aſſented to, at leaſt by all who are denominated *whigs*, the friends of our own revolution, and of that which has lately taken place in America. To this claſs of politicians, you, Sir, have hitherto profeſſed to belong, and traces of theſe principles may be perceived in this work of yours.

Notwithſtanding "the ſacredneſs," as you call it, p. 29, "of an hereditary principle of ſucceſſion," in our government, you allow of "a power of "change in its application in caſes of extreme "emergency;" adding, however, that "the change

"ſhould be confined to the *peccant part* only." Nor do you deny that the great end and object of all government, that which makes it preferable to a ſtate of anarchy, is *the good of the people.* It is *better* for them, and they are *happier* in a ſtate of ſociety and government. For the ſame reaſon, you muſt allow that that particular form of government, which is beſt adapted to promote the happineſs of any people, is the beſt for that people.

If you admit thus much, you muſt alſo allow that, ſince every private perſon is juſtified in bettering his condition, and indeed commended for it; a nation is not to be condemned for endeavouring to better theirs. Conſequently, if they find their form of government to be a bad one, whether it was ſo originally, or became ſo through abuſe or accident, they will do very well to change it for a better. A partial change, no doubt, will be preferable to a total one, if a partial change will be ſufficient for the purpoſe. But if it appear that all attempts to mend an old conſtitution would be in vain, and the people prefer a new one, their neighbours have no more buſineſs to find fault with them, than with any individual, who ſhould think it more adviſeable to pull down an old and inconvenient houſe, and build another from the foundation, rather than lay out his money in repairs. Nations, no doubt, as well as individuals, may judge wrong. They may act pre-

cipitately, and they may ſuffer in conſequence of it: but this is only a reaſon for caution, and does not preclude a right of judging and acting for themſelves, in the beſt manner they can.

"The very idea," you ſay, p. 44, "of the fabri-"cation of a new government is enough to fill us "with diſguſt and horror." It is, no doubt, far from being a thing deſirable in itſelf; but it may nevertheleſs be neceſſary; and for all the evils ariſing from the change, you ſhould blame not the framers of the new government, but the wretched ſtate of the old one, and thoſe who brought it into that ſtate. That ſome very material change was wanting in the old government of France, you cannot deny, after allowing, p. 195, that "in that country "the unlimited power of the ſovereign over the "perſons of his ſubjects, was inconſiſtent with law "and liberty." On other occaſions, I believe you have expreſſed yourſelf in a ſtronger manner than this. If *law* and *liberty* were wanting in the old conſtitution, the peccant part muſt have been the very foundation of it; ſo that nothing effectual could have been done ſhort of taking down the whole.

If theſe incontrovertible *principles* and *facts* be admitted, I can ſee no reaſon for your exclaiming ſo violently as you do againſt the late revolution in France. Beſides, whatever has been done, and in whatever manner it has been done, if the nation itſelf,

itſelf, whom alone it concerns, do not complain, we have no buſineſs to complain for them, any farther than the intereſt we take in the welfare of others, may lead us to feel for the diſtreſſes which we apprehend their folly and precipitancy may bring upon them. I ſhall, however, briefly conſider the principal of your objections to this revolution.

You conſider the preſent National Aſſembly of France as uſurpers, aſſuming a power that does not belong to them. "I can never," you ſay, p. 242, "conſider this aſſembly as any thing elſe "than a voluntary aſſociation of men, who have "availed themſelves of circumſtances to ſeize upon "the power of the ſtate. They have not the "ſanction and authority of the character under "which they firſt met. They have aſſumed an-"other, of a very different nature, and have com-"pletely altered and inverted all the relations in "which they originally ſtood. They do not hold "the authority they exerciſe under any conſtitu-"tional law of the ſtate. They have departed from "the inſtructions of the people by whom they "were ſent, which inſtructions, as the aſſembly did "not act in virtue of any ancient uſage, or ſettled "law, were the ſole ſource of their authority."

Now, Sir, even allowing this to be true; admitting this National Aſſembly to have had no regular ſummons to meet, or to do any buſineſs at all;

ſuppoſing them to have been men who roſe out of the earth, or who dropped down from the clouds, or that no body could tell whence they came, and that, without any authority whatever, they took upon themſelves to frame a new conſtitution of government for the French nation; if the nation really approve of it, acquieſce in it, and actually adopt it, it becomes from that time their own act, and the Aſſembly can only be conſidered as the propoſers and adviſers. It is the acquieſcence of the people that gives any form of government its proper ſanction, and that legalizes it. Changes of government cannot be brought about by eſtabliſhed forms and rules, becauſe there is no ſuperior power to preſcribe thoſe rules. There are no ſupreme courts comprehending theſe great objects. Alſo, the caſes occur ſo rarely, and they are ſo unlike to one another, that it would be to no purpoſe to look for precedents.

Now, that the French revolution is juſtifiable on this plain principle, is evident from the ſingle circumſtance of the National Aſſembly having continued their ſittings without moleſtation, and from their decrees having been actually obeyed, for ſomething more than a year at leaſt. This Aſſembly does not conſiſt, I believe, of more than about one thouſand perſons, and at firſt they had no army at their command; whereas at preſent the whole force

of

of the ſtate is in their hands. This force could not have been transferred from the king to them, without the conſent both of the army, and of the nation which ſupports that army. As the nation does not complain of this tranſlation of power, it is evident they do not think themſelves aggrieved, and that the change has been made with their approbation. Here, then, we ſee all the marks of a *legal government*, or a government that is really the *choice of the people*. I do not ſay what difficulties may hereafter ariſe (which if they do, they will probably be the effect of their former government) to induce them to change their opinion. For neither that nation, nor any other, is omniſcient and infallible.

Without examining into the former ſyſtem of government, or the adminiſtration of it, we may take for granted, that it muſt have become extremely odious to the country in general, from the almoſt univerſal, and the very hearty, concurrence with which the revolution was brought about. A whole people is not apt to revolt, till oppreſſion has become extreme, and been long continued, ſo that they deſpair of any other remedy than that deſperate one. The ſtrength of an eſtabliſhed government, eſpecially when it is in few hands, and has a large ſtanding army at its command, is almoſt infinite; ſo that many nations quietly ſuffer every evil, and the country becomes in a manner deſolate,

without their making any attempt to relieve themſelves. This is the caſe in all the Turkiſh dominions, and is ſaid to be very nearly ſo in Spain and other countries. Whenever, therefore, we ſee a whole nation, or a great majority of it, riſing as one man againſt an old government, and overturning it, we may ſafely conclude that their provocation was great, and their cauſe good.

An oppreſſed people do not, however, in general *ſee* any thing more than what they immediately *feel*. All they think of is to ſhake off the load which they can no longer bear; and having thought of nothing but the particular evil that galled them, they are very apt, in their future ſettlement, to guard againſt *that* only, without attending to the whole of their new ſituation, and the greater evils that may poſſibly ariſe from it. Whether the French have done ſo or not, time muſt diſcover. But if the people in general be well informed, and well diſpoſed, they may make many experiments of new forms of government without much inconvenience; and though beginning with a very imperfect one, they may adopt a very good one at the laſt.

Was it not predicted that the Americans, on their breaking off from this country, would run into univerſal confuſion, and immediately fall to cutting one another's throats? But though that diſruption was a violent one, and was effected by a war, which

which drained all their reſources, they never ſuffered for want of government. When the war was over they bore very contentedly ſeveral imperfect and disjointed forms; and now, having taken much time to deliberate on the ſubject, they have adopted a more comprehenſive one. But of *this* they only propoſe to make a trial, and if it ſhould not anſwer, they will, no doubt, endeavour to improve upon it.

Now, why may not this be the caſe with the French, eſpecially as they have no enemies to contend with, and interrupt their proceedings? I do not, I own, diſtinctly perceive the wiſdom of ſeveral parts of the frame of government, at preſent adopted by the National Aſſembly, and many of the remarks that you have made upon it, may, for any thing that I know, be very juſt; but not being a judge of their circumſtances, and conſequently of all their reaſons, I preſume that they could not for the preſent do any better. In future time, however, whatever it be that is now deficient may be ſupplied. And conſidering the apparent ſtrength of the ancient French government, and the great numbers that depended upon it (far more, I ſhould imagine, than upon the court and the miniſtry in this country) I wonder that the revolution was brought about with ſo much eaſe, and ſo little bloodſhed.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

Of ſome Particulars in the new Conſtitution of France, and ſome Circumſtances attending the Diſſolution of the old one.

DEAR SIR,

IT is very poſſible that the National Aſſembly, having entered upon the buſineſs of reforming the whole ſtate in an unexpected manner, when little could have been preconcerted, may have acted injudiciouſly in more reſpects than one; but allowance ſhould be made for their peculiar circumſtances. The opportunity that was given them to act was ſuch as they might in vain have waited for, if they had done nothing till they had been prepared to make the moſt of it. They did right, therefore, to do the beſt they could, as the occaſion offered.

They might, for example, have divided themſelves into two houſes, and, as in this country, have given each houſe a negative in all their tranſactions, and another to the king. But this might have appeared too hazardous at that time; and indeed it is very probable that, upon that plan, nothing effectual

fectual could have been done at all. But they may adopt this method if they ſhould hereafter ſee reaſon for it. Power is more eaſily given than taken away.

That they have nothing of the nature of a *Senate*, as you complain, p. 287, I do not ſee; while they ſtill retain a king, and allow him to appoint certain miniſters of ſtate.

They may have left too little power in the hands of the crown; but kingly power is a plant which, having once taken root, is very apt to grow too luxuriant; and *this*, though lopped, may ſprout again. As the French kings had gradually acquired, and groſsly abuſed, their power, it is not to be wondered at, if, in the firſt inſtance, the Aſſembly ſhould have reduced it too low.

You particularly complain, p. 296, of the king not having the power of peace and war. But was ever any power more groſsly abuſed than this has been? Infinite have been the evils brought upon whole countries, by princes having it in their power to involve them in war at their pleaſure, from motives of perſonal reſentment and ambition, or the mere caprice of thoſe about them; and in France generally that of their miſtreſſes.

"There is no other way," you ſay, p. 296, "of "keeping other potentates from intriguing diſtinct-"ly and perſonally with the members of your aſ-"ſembly,

" ſembly, from intermeddling in all your concerns, " and fomenting in the heart of your country the " moſt pernicious of all factions; factions in the " intereſt, and under the direction, of foreign " powers." But even *this* is nothing, compared with the evils that ſtates have ſuffered from the power of peace and war being in the hands of the prince, that is, of his miniſters; and cannot foreign powers intrigue with *them* as well as with the leaders of a popular aſſembly? Did not the court of France intrigue with the miniſtry of our Charles II. and is it not always done more or leſs, by all ambaſſadors and their agents in all foreign courts? But if any people was fairly repreſented in a National Aſſembly, ſo that their real intereſts ſhould be better conſulted, cauſes of war would ſeldom occur, and conſequently there would be but little temptation to foreigners to intermeddle in their concerns. For it has been peace or war that has been the chief ſubject of the intrigues that you complain of.

The moſt ſerious difficulty that appears to me to threaten the French government, ariſes from their *debts*, a difficulty brought upon them by their former government, and which, indeed, made it impoſſible to go on any farther with it. This, therefore, is a difficulty that does not neceſſarily attend the formation of the new government, but has been occaſioned by the unwillingneſs of the preſent

ſent governors, that thoſe who have had confidence in the ſtate, ſhould ſuffer from the errors of their predeceſſors. It is the caſe of an heir, who will put himſelf to great inconvenience to pay the debts of a profligate anceſtor.

You cavil, among other things, at the low rank of the members of the National Aſſembly; ſaying, p. 61, "That the majority are of the inferior, un-"learned, mechanical, merely inſtrumental, mem-"bers of the profeſſion of the law. From the "moment," you ſay, "I read the liſt, I ſaw diſ-"tinctly, and very nearly as it has happened, all that "was to follow. It was not to be expected," you "ſay, p. 63, "that they would attend to the ſtabi-"lity of property, whoſe exiſtence had always de-"pended upon whatever rendered property queſtion-"able, ambiguous, and obſcure."

I ſhall not call in queſtion your gift of prophecy. It may be your peculiar talent to ſee all events, paſt, preſent, and to come, in their moſt concealed cauſes; nor ſhall I queſtion what you aſſert to be a fact. But of whomſoever the National Aſſembly of France conſiſts, there cannot well be a doubt of their being a truer repreſentation of the French nation than our Houſe of Commons is of ours; becauſe there cannot well be a worſe, being in the opinion of moſt people, I doubt not, as well as that of Dr. Price, a mere *mockery of repreſentation*, notwithſtanding the influence of thoſe

cauſes

cauſes which I acknowledge to give it the effect of a much better repreſentation.

It ſignifies very little out of what claſs of men the members of the National Aſſembly were choſen, ſince they muſt have been perſons in whom their conſtituents thought they could beſt confide. But if your reaſoning be good, that lawyers, "whoſe ex-"iſtence depends upon rendering property queſtion-"able, ambiguous, and obſcure," will not attend to the ſtability of property, where is our policy in raiſing ſuch men to the rank of judges? We do not think our property leſs ſafe in their hands, becauſe they have always lived by what has been called the *glorious uncertainty of the law*. The firſt American Congreſs, I very well remember, was ſaid to conſiſt chiefly of lawyers; nor is it to be wondered at that it ſhould be ſo; lawyers, who have the talent and the habit of ſpeaking in public, being generally conſpicuous characters in all places. The ſtudy of the law, moreover, leads them to underſtand the conſtitution of the country, and their profeſſion gives them a knowledge of mankind, and the habits of buſineſs. If the lawyers of France do as well as the lawyers of America, they will ſoon wipe away the reproach they may now lie under, and become the object of reſpect, perhaps of dread, to thoſe who at preſent deſpiſe them.

It is amuſing to compare the ſentiments of different writers on the ſame ſubject, and to obſerve in how different a light the ſame thing appears to different minds. I cannot give a better illuſtration of this, than by quoting what Dr. Ramſay, in his *Hiſtory of the American Revolution*, ſays of the firſt Congreſs, as a contraſt to what you ſay of the National Aſſembly of France.

"Of the whole number of deputies which formed the Continental Congreſs of 1774, one half "were lawyers; gentlemen of that profeſſion had "acquired the confidence of the inhabitants by their "exertions in the common cauſe. The previous "meaſures in the reſpective provinces, had been "planned and carried into effect more by lawyers "than by any other order of men. Profeſſionally "taught the rights of the people, they were among "the foremoſt to deſcry every attack made on "their liberties. Bred in the habits of public ſpeaking, they made a diſtinguiſhed figure in the meet-"ings of the people, and were particularly able to "explain to them the tendency of the late acts of "parliament. Exerting their abilities and influence "in the cauſe of their country, they were rewarded "with its confidence." vol. 1. p. 134.

The miſtakes you have fallen into, with reſpect to the preſent government of France, I am informed are groſs, and your cenſures founded on them,

of

of courſe, miſplaced. You particularly amuſe yourſelf and your readers with the diviſion of the country, p. 254, into ſquares, and a ſub-diviſion of ſquares within ſquares, which has no exiſtence but in your own imagination, the actual diviſions of the country being no more ſquares than our counties.

Taking it for granted, p. 272, that the preſent members of the National Aſſembly are not eligible into the next, you deduce many alarming conſequences from ſuch an ill-judged meaſure. But the meaſure is your own, not theirs; the preſent members being as eligible as any others, and, it is generally ſuppoſed, that a great majority of them have given ſo much ſatisfaction to their conſtituents, that they will not fail to be re-elected. As you took ſo much time in preparing your publication for the preſs, you would have done well to have employed part of it in procuring better information. However, your miſtakes will be the means of our getting more correct accounts of the real ſtate of facts; and if any of your cenſures on the new conſtitution of France be juſt, they may be an uſeful and ſeaſonable leſſon to the great actors in the ſcene; who, I doubt not, will readily learn what they can, even from an enemy.

You make the moſt tragical repreſentation of the degraded ſtate of the preſent king of France, calling it, p. 99, " the moſt horrid, atrocious, and

" afflicting

"afflicting ſpectacle, that perhaps ever was exhibit-
"ed to the pity and indignation of mankind;" conſidering him as a perſon who received his crown, with all its powers, from his anceſtors, and who had himſelf done nothing to deſerve the treatment that he met with. Admitting this, if by a ſucceſſion of incroachments, the power of *the crown itſelf* had long been enormous, ſhould that be continued, to the terror and diſtreſs of the country, for the ſake of the innocent head that happens to wear it. And, after all, what has this king ſuffered? He is ſtill the firſt in rank, wealth, and power of any perſon in France. If you ſay that this power is only nominal, I anſwer that the power of the moſt arbitrary princes is little more. They are, in general, only inſtruments in the hands of thoſe who are about them. As to doing what a man really wiſhes to do, the laſt king of France had very little of it; and in general, the higher any man ſtands in the order of ſociety, the leſs power he has of doing what he really likes, and the more of his time he ſpends in doing what he had rather wiſh not to do, than other men.

You make a ſtill more lamentable deſcription of the indignities offered to the queen of France; and on this ſubject you give the moſt unbounded ſcope to your eloquence*, as if you were her *knight*, pledged

* I am informed by a gentleman who was at Paris during the whole of theſe tranſactions, that there is no truth at all in what

to defend her honour. Now, ſuch is the natural prepoſſeſſion of mankind, at leaſt in this part of the world (in which the French nation has generally been conſidered as foremoſt) in favour of the female ſex, and eſpecially in exalted ſtations, that I think it will not be eaſy to account for the fall of this queen from the height of popularity, to the abhorrence and contempt into which, you tell us, ſhe is ſunk, without ſuppoſing ſomething very material to her prejudice, though I do not pretend to ſay what that is. And if ſhe was that intriguing woman, and that enemy to their liberties, that the French nation in general imagine her to have been, ſhe may think herſelf fortunate, in ſuch a revolution as this has been, to have eſcaped with life. But, is the liberty and happineſs of a whole nation to be ſacrificed to female beauty and complaiſance?

Objects appear in very different lights to different perſons, according to their reſpective ſituations, and the opportunities they have of obſerving them. To you, Sir, ſeventeen years ago, the queen of France, then the Dauphineſs, appeared in all her ſplendour, like "the morning ſtar," p. 112, decorating the

Mr. Burke ſays of the queen's bed-chamber being broke into, or the centinel killed. Nothing of the kind, he ſays, was ever heard of till a conſiderable time after the event, and the report aroſe from the Ariſtocrates.

face

face of heaven. To the French themſelves, at that time, ſhe probably appeared in the ſame light; but in the courſe of ſo many years progreſs, ſhe has appeared to them to be nothing better than *a comet*, foreboding every diſaſter, and bringing deſolation and ruin on their country. You ſaw nothing but the fine features, and imagined them to belong to a Venus, a Juno, or a Pallas. The French, it ſeems, have diſcovered the *ſnaky hair*, and find her to be a mere Meduſa; and the "ten thouſand "ſwords," that you ſay were then ready "to leap "from their ſcabbards, to avenge even a look that "threatened her with inſult," would now be drawn againſt any who would defend her conduct.

You will probably ſay that ſomething, at leaſt, ſhould have been *proved* againſt the queen of France, as well as againſt the king. But where, Sir, was the court of law, or juſtice, in which ſuch a ſuit could be inſtituted? When there are no ordinary means of redreſſing grievances, the people who feel them, and have no other remedy, will have recourſe to extraordinary ones; and if thirty millions find their intereſts incompatible with that of a few, they, of courſe, being the judges, will not heſitate to decide for themſelves, and carry that deciſion into execution. In this they will, no doubt, proceed *irregularly*. But you, Sir, ſhould have been upon the ſpot, and have told them how to proceed in that *grave* and *decorous manner*, in which you now ſay,

p. 23, they ought to have acted on this great occaſion; and at the ſame time have obtained effectual redreſs of their grievances. For without this, they would have done worſe than nothing.

Kings and miniſters of ſtate are alone reſponſible for all the confuſion and bloodſhed which attend thoſe revolutions which their abuſe of power has rendered neceſſary. They choak up the ordinary channels of juſtice, and then complain that it overflows its bounds, and that the country is deluged by it. They who firſt raiſe a ſtorm are anſwerable for all the devaſtation that it may make.

You lay to the charge of the National Aſſembly what, it is evident, they never authoriſed, and what, I doubt not, they condemn and regret, even more than you do. "Their cruelty, you ſay, p. 58, has "not been even the baſe reſult of fear. It has been "the effect of their ſenſe of perfect ſafety, in au- "thoriſing treaſons, robberies, rapes, aſſaſſinations, "ſlaughters, and burnings, throughout their har- "raſſed land. But the cauſe of all was plain from "the beginning. This unforced choice, this fond "election, of evil, would appear perfectly unac- "countable, if we did not conſider the compoſition "of the National Aſſembly, &c."

This Sir, beſides ſuppoſing what all moraliſts reject as abſolutely impoſſible in nature, viz. that any men chuſe evil for its own ſake, is charging upon the National Aſſembly every outrage committed

mitted by Frenchmen (and more, I believe, than ever were committed by them) which were any way connected with the revolution. But is this equitable? Should any thing be laid to the charge of any men, or any body of men, to which they were no way acceſſary, by their concurrence at the time, or their approbation afterwards? Was the execution of perſons particularly obnoxious to the populace, and effected by the populace only, to be aſcribed to the National Aſſembly? Or were the inſults which you have ſo pathetically deſcribed, as offered to your adorable queen of France, done by the orders of that body? You muſt know that they were as innocent of them as the parliament of Great Britain, or as yourſelf. When any murder is committed, is the firſt perſon that you chuſe to lay hold of, the guilty perſon?

In the ſame raſh and indiſcriminate manner you deſcribe Dr. Price as exulting in the above-mentioned horrid outrages, which, I dare ſay, give him much more ſerious concern than they do you, and for a very obvious reaſon. He wiſhes to recommend the revolution, and therefore is ſorry for every thing that diſgraces it; whereas you wiſh to diſcredit it, and are evidently not diſpleaſed with any circumſtance that favours your purpoſe. Dr. Price rejoices in the *good*, and you moſt uncandidly repreſent him as rejoicing in the *evil* that has neceſſarily accompanied it.

I am, DEAR SIR, yours, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Nature of Government, and the Rights of Men and of Kings.

DEAR SIR,

CONSIDERING how much has been written on the ſubject of *government* ſince the Revolution in this country, an event which more than any thing elſe contributed to open the eyes of Engliſhmen, with reſpect to the true principles of it, it is not a little extraordinary that any man of reading and reflexion, as you are, ſhould depart from them ſo much as you have done.

To vindicate this Revolution, Lord Somers, Biſhop Hoadley, Mr. Locke, and many others, have laid it down as a maxim, that all power in any ſtate is derived from the people, and that the great object of all government, is the public good. As a conſequence from theſe fundamental principles, they maintain that all magiſtrates, being originally appointed by the people, are anſwerable to them for their conduct in office, and removeable at their pleaſure. The right of reſiſting an oppreſſive go-

vernment,

vernment, that is, ſuch as the people ſhall deem to be oppreſſive, they hold moſt ſacred.

You, Sir, do not directly, and in ſo many words, deny theſe great principles of all government, or the general concluſion drawn from them. In fact, you admit them all, when you allow, p. 87, that "civil "ſociety is made for the advantage of man." But you advance what is really inconſiſtent with theſe leading principles, and you would tie up our hands from making any effectual uſe of them. You ſeem to have forgotten what you muſt have formerly learned; but it is too late for *us* to go to ſchool again, and relearn the firſt elements of political ſcience. What our predeceſſors took great pains to *prove*, we now receive as *axioms*, and without heſitation act upon them.

To make the *public good* the ſtandard of right or wrong, in whatever relates to ſociety and government, beſides being the moſt natural and rational of all rules, has the farther recommendation of being the eaſieſt of application. Either what *God has ordained*, or what *antiquity* authoriſes, may be very difficult to aſcertain; but what regulation is moſt conducive to the *public good*, though not always without its difficulties, yet in general it is much more eaſy to determine. But ſuppoſe a nation ſhould never have had a free government, or could not prove that they ever had one, are they

for that reaſon always to continue ſlaves? Would it be unlawful, or wrong, in the Turks to do what the French nation has now done?

You treat with ridicule the ideas of the *rights of men*, and ſuppoſe that mankind, when once they have entered into a ſtate of ſociety, neceſſarily abandon all their proper *natural rights*, and thenceforth have only ſuch as they derive from ſociety. "As to the ſhare of power," you ſay, p. 87, "authority and direction, which each individual "ought to have in the management of the ſtate, "that I muſt deny to be among the direct original "rights of man in civil ſociety; for I have in my "contemplation the civil, ſocial man, and no "other. It is a thing to be ſettled by convention."

But what does this *convention* reſpect, beſide the ſecure enjoyment of ſuch *advantages*, or *rights*, as have been uſually termed *natural*, as life, liberty, and property, which men had *from nature*, without ſocieties or artificial combinations of men? Men cannot, ſurely, be ſaid to *give up* their natural rights by entering into a compact for the better ſecuring of them. And if they make a wiſe compact, they will never wholly exclude themſelves from all ſhare in the adminiſtration of their government, or ſome controul over it. For without *this* their ſtipulated rights would be very inſecure.

However

However, ſhould any people be ſo unwiſe as to leave the whole adminiſtration of their government, without any expreſs right of control, in the hands of their magiſtrates; if thoſe magiſtrates do not give the people what they deem to be an equivalent for what they gave up for the accommodation of others, they are certainly at liberty to conſider the original compact as broken. They then revert to a ſtate of nature, and may enter into a new ſtate of ſociety, and adopt a new form of government, in which they may make better terms for themſelves.

It is one of the moſt curious paradoxes in this work of yours, which abounds with them, that the rights of men above-mentioned (called by you, p. 91, " the pretended rights of the French theoriſts) " are all extremes, and in proportion as they are " metaphyſically true, they are morally and poli- " tically falſe." Now by *metaphyſically* true can only be meant *ſtrictly* and *properly* true, and how this can be in any ſenſe *falſe*, is to me incomprehenſible. If the above-mentioned rights be the *true*, that is the *juſt*, and *reaſonable* rights of men, they ought to be provided for in all ſtates, and all forms of government; and if they be not, the people have juſt cauſe to complain, and to look out for ſome mode of redreſs.

You ſtrongly reprobate the doctrine of *kings being the choice of the people*, a doctrine advanced, but

but not firſt advanced by Dr. Price in his Revolution Sermon. "This doctrine," you ſay, p. 17, "as applied to the prince now on the Britiſh throne, "is either nonſenſe, and therefore neither true "nor falſe, or it affirms a moſt unfounded, "dangerous, illegal, and unconſtitutional poſi-"tion. According to this ſpiritual doctor of po-"litics, if his majeſty does not owe his crown to "the choice of his people, he is no *lawful king*, &c.

On the ſame principle you equally reprobate the doctrine of the king being the *ſervant of the people*, whereas the law, as you ſay, p. 41, calls him *our ſovereign lord the king**. But ſince you allow, ibid. that "kings are in one ſenſe, undoubtedly, "the ſervants of the people, becauſe their power "has no other rational end than that of the ge-"neral advantage," it is evident that it is only Dr. Price's *words* that you quarrel with. Your *ideas* are, in fact, the very ſame with his, though you call his doctrine, p. 35, not only *unconſtitutional*, but *ſeditious*; adding that, "it is now publicly "taught, avowed, and printed;" whereas it was taught, avowed, and even printed, before either you or Dr. Price were born.

* This title of *ſovereign lord*, derived from the Feudal ſyſtem, given to a king of England, is by no means agreeable to the nature and ſpirit of our preſent conſtitution, which is a *limited monarchy*, and not *unlimited* as that title implies. Our only proper *ſovereign* is the parliament.

Has

Has not the chief magiſtrate in every country, as well as the chief officer in every town, a certain *duty* to perform, with certain emoluments, and *privileges*, allowed him in conſideration of the proper diſcharge of that duty? And if the town officer, though having chief authority in his diſtrict, yet in conſequence of being *appointed* and *paid* for his ſervices by the town, is never conſidered in any other light than that of the *ſervant of the town*; is not the chief magiſtrate in any country, let him be called *ſovereign*, *king*, or what you pleaſe (for that is only a name) the *ſervant of the people*? What real difference can there be in the two caſes? They each diſcharge a certain duty, and have a certain ſtipulated reward for it. The office being *hereditary*, makes no real difference. In our laws, and thoſe of other nations, there are precedents enow of men's whole eſtates being confiſcated for crimes; and this of courſe excludes the heir.

If, as you expreſsly acknowledge, the only rational end of the power of a king is the *general advantage*, that is, the *good of the people*, muſt not the people be of courſe the judges, whether they derive advantage from him and his government or not, that is, whether they be well or ill *ſerved* by him? Though, there is no expreſs, there is, you muſt acknowledge, a virtual, *compact between the king and the people*. This, indeed, is particularly

larly mentioned in the Act which implies the abdication of king James, though you say p. 38, it is *too guarded and too circumstantial*; and what can this compact be, but a stipulation for protection, &c. on the part of the king, and allegiance on the part of the people? If, therefore instead of *protection*, they find *oppression*, certainly allegiance is no longer due. Hence, according to common sense, and the principles of the Revolution, the right of a subject to resist a tyrant, and dethrone him; and what is this, but, in other words, shocking as they may sound to your ears, dismissing, or *cashiering a bad servant*, as a person who had abused his trust.

So fascinating is the situation in which our kings are placed, that it is of great importance to remind them of the true relation they bear to *the people*, or, as they are fond of calling them, *their people*. They are too apt to imagine that their rights are independent of the will of the people, and consequently that they are not accountable to them for any use they may make of their power; and their numerous dependents, and especially the clergy, are too apt to administer this pleasing intoxicating poison. This was the ruin of the Stuarts, and it is a danger that threatens every prince, and every country, from the same quarter. Your whole book, Sir, is little else than a vehicle for the same poison, inculcating, but inconsistently enough,

a *reſpect for princes*, independent of their being originally the choice of the people, as if they had ſome natural and indefeaſible right to reign over us, they being born to command, and we to obey; and then, whether the origin of this power be *divine*, or have any other ſource independent of the people, it makes no difference to us.

With the ſuperſtitious reſpect for kings, and the ſpirit of chivalry, which nothing but an age of extreme barbariſm recommended, and which civilization has baniſhed, you ſeem to think that every thing great and dignified has left us, "Never, ne-"ver more," you ſay, p. 113, "ſhall we behold "that generous loyalty to rank and ſex, that proud "ſubmiſſion, that dignified obedience, that ſubor-"dination of the heart, that kept alive even in ſer-"vitude itſelf the ſpirit of an exalted freedom. "The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence "of nations, the nurſe of manly ſentiment and he-"roic enterprize, is gone. It is gone; that ſenſi-"bility of principle, that chaſtity of honour, which "felt a ſtain like a wound, which inſpired courage "whilſt it mitigated ferocity, which enobled what-"ever it touched, and under which vice itſelf loſt "half its evil, by loſing all its groſſneſs."

This is perhaps the moſt admired paſſage in your whole performance; but it appears to me, that in a great pomp of *words*, it contains but few *ideas*,

and

and ſome of them inconſiſtent and abſurd. So different alſo are men's feelings, from the difference, no doubt, of our educations, and the different ſentiments we voluntarily cheriſh through life, that a ſituation which gives you the idea of *pride*, gives me that of *meanneſs*. You are proud of what, in my opinion, you ought to be aſhamed, the idolatry of a fellow creature, and the abaſement of yourſelf. It diſcovers a diſpoſition from which no "manly "ſentiment, or heroic enterprize" can be expected. I ſubmit to a king, or to any other civil magiſtrate, becauſe the good order of ſociety requires it, but I feel no *pride* in that *ſubmiſſion*; and the "ſub-"ordination of my heart," I reſerve for *character* only, not for *ſtation*. As a citizen, the object of my reſpect is *the nation* and *the laws*. The *magiſtrates*, by whatever name they are called, I reſpect only as the confidential ſervants of the nation, and the adminiſtrators of the laws.

Theſe ſentiments, juſt in themſelves, and favouring of no ſuperſtition, appear to me to become men, whom nature has made equal, and whoſe great object, when formed into ſocieties, it ſhould be to promote their common happineſs. I am proud of feeling myſelf *a man among men*, and I leave it to you, Sir, to be "proud of your *obedience*, and to keep alive," as well as you can, "in ſervitude itſelf the ſpirit of "an exalted freedom." I think it much eaſier, at leaſt, to be preſerved *out* of a ſtate of ſervitude than

in

in it. You take much pains to gild your chains, but they are chains ſtill.

If, Sir, you profeſs this "generous loyalty, this "proud ſubmiſſion, this dignified obedience, and "this ſubordination of the heart," both to *rank and ſex*, how concentrated and exalted muſt be the ſentiment, where rank and ſex are united! What an *exalted freedom* would you have felt, had you had the happineſs of being a ſubject of the Empreſs of Ruſſia; your ſovereign, being then a *woman?* Fighting under her auſpices, you would no doubt, have been the moſt puiſſant of knights errant, and her redoubted champion, againſt the whole Turkiſh empire, the ſovereign of which is only a *man.*

"It is to no purpoſe to ſay," as you do, p. 19, "that the king of Great Britain reigns at this day "by a fixed rule of ſucceſſion, according to the "laws of his country, and that he holds his crown "in contempt of the choice of the Revolution ſo-"ciety, which has not a ſingle vote for a king "among them, either individually or collectively;" when you acknowledge that "all the kingdoms "of Europe were, at a remote period, elective," and that "the preſent king holds his rank no "longer than while the legal conditions of the com-"pact of ſovereignty are performed by him." This, Sir, is granting all that we, ſeditious as our doctrine is, contend for. Here is, according to yourſelf,

yourſelf, a certain *condition* on which kings reign. If, therefore, that condition be not performed, the obligation of allegiance is diſcharged.

Though we do not chuſe any particular king, the nation originally choſe to be *governed by kings*, with ſuch limitations, with reſpect to their duty and prerogatives, as they then choſe to preſcribe. And whether the departure from the original and proper duty of a king be made at once, or by degrees, which has generally been the caſe; and though the people may have been reſtrained by their circumſtances from checking the incroachments of their kings, the *right* of doing it muſt ever remain inherent in them. They muſt always have a power of reſuming what themſelves gave, when the condition on which it was given is not performed. They can ſurely recall a truſt that has been abuſed, and reinſtate themſelves in their former ſituation, or in a better, if they can find one.

If there be, what you allow, a *compact of ſovereignty*, who are the *parties*, but the *people* and the *king*; and if the compact be broken on his ſide, are not the rank and the privileges, which he held upon the condition of obſerving the terms of the compact, forfeited? "The rule of ſucceſſion," you ſay, "is according to the laws of his country." But what, according to yourſelf, is the origin of both our common and ſtatute law?

" both theſe deſcriptions of law, " you ſay, p. 28, " are of the ſame force, and are derived from an " equal authority, emanating from the common " agreement, and original compact of the ſtate " *(communi ſponſione reipublicæ)* and as ſuch are " equally binding on king and people too, as long " as the terms are obſerved, and they continue the " ſame body politic." Laws, then, not coming down from heaven, but being *made* by men, may alſo be *changed* by them; and what is a *conſtitution of government*, but the *greater laws* of the ſtate? Kings, therefore, as well as the people, may violate theſe laws, by which they are equally bound; and if other violators of law be puniſhable, by degradation or otherwiſe, why ſhould kings be excepted? Are *their* violations of the law, or the conſtitution, leſs injurious to the commonwealth than thoſe of other tranſgreſſors? Let the puniſhment of kings be as *grave* and *decorous*, p. 23, as you pleaſe, but let juſtice, ſubſtantial juſtice, be done.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of the Revolution in England compared with that in France.

DEAR SIR,

IT is impoſſible to conſider the late Revolution in France without having in our eye that which took place in England in 1688. This has had ſo much of the cordial approbation of all claſſes of people here, at leaſt all thoſe who are denominated *whigs*, that you found yourſelf under the neceſſity of approving of it. But you wiſh to diſtinguiſh between the principles on which the great actors in that memorable event proceeded, and thoſe of the National Aſſembly in France. The promoters of the Engliſh Revolution, you would have us underſtand, were not guided by any view to the *natural* (or as you affect to call them, the *chimerical*) *rights of men*, but were influenced by a regard to rights ſanctioned by *ancient poſſeſſion*, and conſequently that their example furniſhes no authority for any people to chuſe their own governors, or to diſmiſs them for miſconduct.

You appeal to *Lord Somers*, p. 27, for the principles of the Engliſh Revolution. Let his writ-

ings,

ings, then, explain his ſentiments on the nature of government. Now the very title page of a tract generally aſcribed to him, entitled, *the Judgment of whole Kingdoms and Nations concerning the Rights, Power, and Prerogative of Kings, and the Rights, Privileges, and Properties of the People*, aſſerts, that "all magiſtrates and governors proceed from the "people." This he proves at large in the courſe of the work, in which he ſhows, as an inference from this great principle, that the people, when oppreſſed, are juſtifiable in relieving themſelves by a change of their governors, or of their government; exploding, in a variety of lights, the ſlaviſh doctrine, to uſe his own terms, of *paſſive obedience and loyalty*.

One of the moſt extraordinary of your aſſertions, with reſpect to the Revolution in England, is the following, "So far," you ſay, p. 27, "is it "from being true, that we acquired a right by the "Revolution to elect our kings, that if we had "poſſeſſed it before, the Engliſh nation did at that "time moſt ſolemnly renounce and abdicate it for "themſelves, and for all their poſterity, for ever." But could they ſeriouſly mean to bind their poſterity from ever doing again what they themſelves then did? Did they not by changing the natural ſucceſſion of the kings of this realm, actually *exerciſe* the right of chuſing kings, declaring what deſcription of perſons ſhould from that time ſucceed

to the crown? And what any one parliament did, a ſucceeding one might, no doubt, undo.

But that no ſuch thing as a renunciation of a right to do any thing of this kind, was really meant by the legiſlature of that age, is evident from two Acts of Parliament, viz. of the fourth and ſixth of Queen Ann, the former of them made before the Union; and the latter in the ſame words after it, reſpecting the whole of Great Britain. This was in the time of Lord Somers, and no doubt with his concurrence; and from them it appears that your aſſertion is even nothing leſs than *high treaſon.* The words of the Acts are as follows, "If any perſon ſhall, by writing or printing, maintain, "and affirm, that the kings or queens of this realm, "with and by the authority of Parliament, are not "able to make laws and ſtatutes of ſufficient vali- "dity, to limit the crown, and the deſcent, inheri- "tance, and government thereof, every ſuch per- "ſon ſhall be guilty of high treaſon."

Far am I from wiſhing to bring you into any ſe- rious inconvenience by repreſenting you as hav- ing offended againſt the laws of your country; but I wiſh it may ſerve as a hint to you, to pay more attention to the great principles of our con- ſtitution, as well as to the univerſal principles of government, and the *rights of men*, offenſive as the term may be to you, for the future.

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You ſay, p. 31. "The gentlemen of the *ſociety* "*for revolutions*" (as you contemptuouſly call it) "ſee nothing of that in 1688, but the deviation "from the conſtitution; and they take the devia- "tion from the principle, for the principle." Let us then conſider the ſimple *fact*, that we may diſcover the true *principle* of the proceeding, and examine the juſtice of your complaint. A king had abuſed his truſt, and, in the conſtruction of the remaining governing powers of the country, had virtually *abdicated the government*. According to the eſtabliſhed rule of ſucceſſion, his ſon ſhould have ſucceeded him, but they apprehended the ſame evils from the ſon, which they had experienced from the father, and likewiſe from all princes of the ſame deſcription with the father, that is, all who ſhould profeſs the Roman Catholic religion. They therefore, made a law to exclude all ſuch princes, and fixed the ſucceſſion in the neareſt Proteſtant line. But, in conjunction with the firſt of this line, they choſe a perſon entirely foreign to it, who had no legal pretenſions to the crown at all, being only the huſband of Queen Mary, as Prince George of Denmark was of Queen Ann.

Here then, was a *choice* made, both of a particular king *pro tempore*, and alſo of *a new line of ſucceſſion* for future kings. Certainly, therefore, if the conduct of our anceſtors in that period be any pre-

cedent for future proceedings, it authorizes the people of this country not only to make any change in the rule of ſucceſſion to the crown, but to make any perſon king, and, in fact to do whatever they ſhall think neceſſary for the redreſs of their grievances. This was unqueſtionably the proper *reaſon*, *motive*, *principle*, or *rule*, of their conduct; and to act upon it in any future time cannot with propriety be called taking "the deviation from their principle for the principle." To do any thing that ſhall be deemed neceſſary to remove any preſent evils, and to prevent the recurrence of them, would be doing no more than they would have done in our circumſtances.

Conſidering the reverence that is always paid to whatever is *ancient*, it is certainly wiſe in any nation to preſerve old inſtitutions as long as they are tolerable, becauſe the people will bear with them better than with new ones. This principle no doubt, influenced our anceſtors at the Revolution, and at other times. They contented themſelves with removing the preſſing grievance, and kept as near to the ancient ſyſtem as they could. At the Revolution, there was no occaſion for any thing more; at leaſt the country would not bear any thing more, than a deviation from the line of ſucceſſion to the crown, leaving the Popiſh, and adopting the Proteſtant line. But if more had been wanted, they would certainly have done more.

You call the Revolution, p. 24, "an act of neceſſity." But what was it that made it neceſſary? On what *political principle* was the neceſſity founded? Was it not deemed neceſſary becauſe the people apprehended that their liberties, and conſequently their happineſs, were endangered by the meaſures of the king; and therefore, though, as you juſtly ſay, p. 44, "a revolution is the laſt "reſource of the thinking and the good," it was what they found themſelves driven to. It was the leſs of two evils which they had in proſpect; and what they did they thought to be neceſſary for the removal, and prevention, of the evil. And on the ſame *principle* that they changed the order of ſucceſſion, they would have changed the whole frame of the government. Had they apprehended *government by kings* in general to be as great a grievance as that by *Popiſh kings*, they would have aboliſhed kingly government altogether, and this country would now have been a republic.

Whenever circumſtances have been favourable to greater changes, wiſe nations have not failed to adopt them. When America was driven, as you will allow (for at that time you were very active in the buſineſs, and many a time have I, with ſingular ſatisfaction, heard you plead the cauſe of American liberty) by the oppreſſion of this country, to break entirely from it, the Americans, ſen-

ſible of more evils attending their former government, than our anceſtors at the Revolution, ventured to do a great deal more, and ſet a glorious example to France, and to the world. They formed a completely new government on the principles of *equal liberty*, and the *rights of men*, "without nobles," as Dr. Price expreſſively and happily ſaid, "without biſhops, and without a king;" which, indeed, the Dutch, after their ſeparation from the Spaniſh monarchy, did in a great meaſure before them. If arbitrary princes tremble at theſe great *examples* (at the very idea of which you yourſelf, as if you were a part of royalty, and appertaining to it, tremble alſo) it is time that they who ſo long have made others tremble, ſhould, in their turn, tremble themſelves. But let the *people* rejoice. It will either make their princes keep within bounds, or encourage them to hope that the time of their deliverance is at hand.

That all perſons have not the ſame dread of revolutions which has ſeized on you, and that the genuine principles of the Revolution are ſtill preſerved and taught in this country, will appear from the following extracts from *Mr. Paley's Principles of Moral and political Philoſophy*, with which I ſhall cloſe this letter.

"*Government may be too ſecure.* The greateſt tyrants have been thoſe, whoſe titles were the moſt unqueſtioned. Whenever, therefore, the opinion of

" of right becomes too predominant and ſuperſti-
" tious, it is abated by *breaking the cuſtom.* Thus
" the Revolution broke the *cuſtom of ſucceſſion*, and
" thereby moderated both in the prince and people,
" thoſe lofty notions of hereditary right, which in
" the one were become a continual temptation to
" tyranny, and diſpoſed the other to invite ſervi-
" tude, by undue compliances and dangerous con-
" ceſſions." p. 411, Quarto Edition.

" The true reaſon why mankind hold in deteſta-
" tion the memory of thoſe who have ſold their li-
" berty to a tyrant, is, that together with their own,
" they ſold commonly, or endangered, the liberty
" of others; which certainly they had no right to
" diſpoſe of." p. 77.

" No uſage, law, or authority whatever, is ſo
" binding, that it need or ought to be continued,
" when it may be changed with advantage to the
" community. The family of the prince, the or-
" der of ſucceſſion, the prerogative of the crown,
" the form and parts of the legiſlature, together with
" the reſpective powers, office, duration, and mu-
" tual dependency of the ſeveral parts, are all only
" ſo many *laws*, mutable like other laws, whenever
" expediency requires, either by the ordinary act of
" the legiſlature, or if the occaſion deſerve it, by
" the interpoſition of the people. Theſe points are
" wont to be approached with a kind of awe, they

" are

" are repreſented to the mind as principles of the " conſtitution, ſettled by our anceſtors, and being " ſettled to be no more committed to innovation " or debate, as foundations never to be ſtirred; as " the terms and conditions of the ſocial compact, " to which every citizen of the ſtate has engaged " his fidelity, by virtue of a promiſe, which he " cannot now recal. Such reaſons have no place " in our ſyſtem: to us, if there be any good rea- " ſon for treating theſe with more deference and " reſpect than other laws, it is either the advan- " tage of the preſent conſtitution of government " (which reaſon muſt be of different force in different " countries) or becauſe, in all countries, it is of im- " portance, that the form and uſage of governing " be acknowledged and underſtood, as well by the " governors as the governed, and becauſe the ſel- " domer it is changed the more it will be reſpected " by both ſides." p. 426.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER V.

Of the Revolution Society in England, and Mr. Burke's Reflexions on Dr. Price.

DEAR SIR,

YOU are exceedingly offended at the conduct of the Revolution Society in England, for ſending congratulations to the National Aſſembly in France. "I ſhould think it," you ſay, p. 6, "at "leaſt improper and irregular, to open a formal "public correſpondence with the actual govern-"ment of a foreign nation, without the expreſs au-"thority of the government under which I live." You think it was done "under an equivocal de-"ſcription, which to many, unacquainted with our "uſages, might make the addreſs appear as the "act of perſons in ſome ſort of a corporate body, "acknowledged by the laws of the kingdom, and "authoriſed to ſpeak the ſenſe of ſome part of it. "It is a policy," you ſay, p. 7, "that has very "much the complexion of a fraud."

But what occaſion could there be to aſk leave of the government of one country to ſend an addreſs

to that of another, unleſs it had been *affected* by the correſpondence; and in *this* caſe the Engliſh government had nothing more to do with the tranſaction than any private individual in the country. Was any thing ſaid by the Revolution Society, *in the name* of the government of this country, or was the latter at all pledged to do one thing or another in the buſineſs?

As to ſuch a reſpectable body of men as the National Aſſembly of France noticing the addreſs of thoſe who compoſe the Revolution Society in England; it is nothing new or uncommon, either for ſmall bodies of men to addreſs large ones, or for large ſocieties to notice ſuch addreſſes; and what material difference is there, whether the perſons addreſſing, and thoſe addreſſed, be of the ſame country, or of different countries? The only queſtion is, whether the addreſs, or the notice, were proper or improper.

The National Aſſembly of France could not be ſo ignorant of the conſtitution of England, as to ſuppoſe that the *Revolution Society* was a body authorized by the ſtate, or that it had any connexion with the government of the country; ſo that there could be no *fraud* or *impoſition* in the caſe; and it may be eaſily ſuppoſed, that, being the founders of a new ſyſtem of government in France, which has hitherto been conſidered as the *natural enemy of England*,

England, they might think it wiſe to embrace the firſt opportunity of ſhewing that they were diſpoſed to be our *friends*, and that they took it kindly, that any number of reſpectable individuals in this country ſhould approve of their proceedings. As far as the tranſaction went, it afforded a proſpect of future good neighbourhood.

The members of the French Aſſembly would judge of the *extent* of the friendly diſpoſition of this country towards them, by the names of the perſons who promoted the meaſure; and when they ſaw that of *Dr. Price*, ſo well known, and ſo favourably known, for true patriotiſm, diſintereſted benevolence, and public ſpirit, both in France and America, they would naturally, and juſtly, conclude, that, though no great part of the Engliſh nation was preſent, thoſe who were ſpoke the ſentiments of great numbers, and thoſe the moſt reſpectable in the country. The good will of ſuch men as Dr. Price (in whatever part of the globe, or for whatever purpoſe aſſembled) even the National Aſſembly of France might conceive to be no inconſiderable ſanction to their proceedings.

Where is the great impropriety of a nation receiving even advice, and much more accepting congratulations, from ſingle men of eminent wiſdom and virtue? And in this light thouſands regard Dr. Price: and notwithſtanding the odium which you, in vain,

vain, endeavour to throw upon him, and which only recoils upon yourſelf, his name will be known, and reſpected, as long as reſpect for religion, for virtue, and for the juſt rights of mankind, ſhall exiſt.

The diſcourſe which gives you ſo much offence, was indeed delivered from a *pulpit*, and is commonly called a *ſermon*; but this is all the impropriety that belongs to it, and therefore affects the *title* only. It was delivered to a number of political friends, on a week day, deſtined to a political purpoſe, and might perhaps as well have been delivered in the room in which the company dined. No preacher, I will venture to ſay, more ſcrupulouſly adapts his uſual diſcourſes to the real occaſions of a chriſtian audience, than Dr. Price does; and had you, Sir, been one of his ſtated hearers (though you may ſhudder at the idea of going into a *Conventicle*) you would, I doubt not, have been both a wiſer and a better man than you now are, wiſe and good as you, nevertheleſs, may be; for I do not judge of your uſual temper and diſpoſition from the ſtrain of this moſt intemperate publication. I know you, and I know it to be unworthy of you.

Beſides, the pulpit has not been thought profaned by *all* ſubjects of a *political*, if of a *generally uſeful*, nature. If ſo, certainly the conduct of the clergy muſt be ſeverely cenſured for the uſual

ſtrain

ſtrain of their preaching on the 30th of January. If they preach in defence of *arbitrary power*, which they generally have done on that day, why may not we preach in defence of the great principle of *equal liberty*, and the moſt important *right of reſiſtance* to ſuch governments as they recommend?

You ſeem to take particular pleaſure in comparing *Dr. Price* to *Hugh Peters*, who expreſſed himſelf in the ſame language with reſpect to the death of king Charles, that Dr. Price has made uſe of with reſpect to the glorious proſpect of things that has opened upon us by the late Revolution in France. No doubt, a very handſome face may have ſome features reſembling thoſe in a very ugly one, and therefore Dr. Price may, without any reflexion upon him, reſemble Hugh Peters in his abhorrence of tyranny, though very different from him in other reſpects. Biſhop Burnet calls Peters "a ſort of "enthuſiaſtic buffoon preacher, and a very vitious "man," and he repreſents him as dying in the moſt cowardly manner*. But will this character apply to Dr. Price, a man whom the Preſident of the Na-

* Neale ſays, that, after the execution of his companion Mr. Cooke, who ſuffered with the greateſt heroiſm, he reſumed his courage, and ſaid to the ſheriff, "Sir, you have ſlain one of the "ſervants of the Lord, and made me behold it, on purpoſe to ter-"rify and diſcourage me; but God has made it an ordinance for "my ſtrengthening and encouragement."

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tional Aſſembly of France has ſtyled, and juſtly ſtyled, the *Apoſtle of Liberty*; though you call him the *Doctor of Politics*, p. 17, the *Political Divine*, p. 20, and load him with every other epithet of contempt that your exuberant imagination, unreſtrained by any regard to decency, can ſupply; at the ſame time that, with your uſual inconſiſtency, you acknowledge, p. 13, that he has "the beſt intentions in the world."

According to you, this Hugh Peters rode in a kind of triumph on the bringing of king Charles a priſoner to London; and he may have triumphed in an indecent and an improper manner. But, in my opinion, there was ſufficient cauſe for triumph. The *thirtieth of January* was (to uſe a phraſe of Admiral Keppel's) a *proud day* for England, as well as the *fourteenth of July* for France; and it will be remembered as ſuch by the lateſt poſterity of *freemen*. Let all tyrants read the hiſtory of both, and tremble, Good princes will read it without any unpleaſant emotion.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

Of the Interference of the State in Matters of Religion in general.

DEAR SIR,

IT was the devout wiſh of Job, who, with exemplary patience, had borne much calumny, as well as ſufferings of other kinds, that his *adverſary had written a book.* The favour which this good man could not obtain, the deſpiſed and oppreſſed Diſſenters have at length been indulged with from you, at leaſt ſo far as relates to the cauſe of your ſtrong attachment to the eſtabliſhed church of this country, which, no doubt, induced you to enter ſo warmly as you did into the oppoſition to our late claims in the Houſe of Commons. We are now happy in having an opportunity of viewing, and examining, the true ſprings of your conduct, and are not obliged to collect your arguments from uncertain report, or the mutilated, and, no doubt, very often falſe, accounts in the newſpapers. We have now the reaſoning of the ſenator from the ſenator himſelf.

I rather wonder, however, at this conduct in *you*, when I find you lamenting, p. 136, that "it "has been our misfortune, and not, as theſe gen- "tlemen think it" (meaning, no doubt, myſelf as well as, others) "the glory, of this age, that every "thing is to be *diſcuſſed*." For certainly ſuch a publication as this of yours, you could not but think, muſt lead to much diſcuſſion. If, therefore, you thought this to be a dangerous proceſs, with reſpect either to *Church* or *State*, you certainly ought not to have entered upon it, by publiſhing any thing on the ſubject; unleſs, indeed, you had thought (which perhaps may have been the caſe) that your publication would effectually deter all opponents; your reaſoning being ſo forcible as to preclude, and be an effectual bar to, all farther diſcuſſion on the ſubject; nor do I much wonder at your entertaining this idea, from the exhibition you have given us of the ſtate of your own mind with reſpect to it.

"Our church eſtabliſhment," you ſay, p. 136, "is the firſt of our prejudices. It is," you ſay again, "the firſt, the laſt, and the midſt in our minds," that is, it occupies the whole capacity of them, ſo that they cannot admit any thing elſe, at leaſt any thing of an oppoſite nature. Of courſe, the maxims on which you proceed muſt to *you* appear incontrovertible. You, therefore, very naturally add, "it

"is

" is not a prejudice deſtitute of reaſon, but involving " in it profound and extenſive wiſdom." For ſuch is the opinion that we all entertain of prejudices deeply rooted in our own minds; though it is no uncommon thing for what appears to be *profound and extenſive wiſdom* to one man, to appear the extreme of *folly* to another; and unfortunately (owing perhaps to the difference of our educations, and early habits) this is preciſely the difference between you and me. What you admire I deſpiſe, and what you think highly uſeful, I am perſuaded is very miſchievous.

However, notwithſtanding the great difference in our *concluſions*, we have, I perceive, ſome great and leading *common principles*; ſo that it may not be difficult to diſcover which of us has departed the fartheſt from them. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew our readers, that with theſe common principles, your concluſions are wholly diſcordant; and I flatter myſelf that, differently as we think on a variety of ſubjects, we have more common principles than you have given ſufficient attention to, and more than you really act upon. You cannot, for example, have that diſlike to *diſcuſſion* which you profeſs, becauſe, in this and in other publications, as well as in your ſpeeches in the Houſe of Commons, you have entered largely into many diſcuſſions; and you muſt alſo agree with me in thinking that the more

important any ſubject is, or the more intereſting it is to men, either as individuals, or members of ſociety, the greater call there is for an accurate diſcuſſion of every thing relating to it; becauſe, in things of this nature, miſtakes are the moſt dangerous, and you are far from ſuppoſing *religion* to be a matter of indifference, either to individuals, or to ſociety. And how can we guard againſt, or indeed be apprized of, any miſtakes, without due examination, or *diſcuſſion?*

That our readers may ſee at one view what it is that you maintain with reſpect to civil eſtabliſhments of religion, I ſhall, before I enter upon the diſcuſſion of them, give our readers a ſummary view of all your poſitions. Confounding, as you evidently do, the idea of *religion* itſelf, with that of the *civil eſtabliſhment* of it, you ſay, "It is the "baſis of civil ſociety, and eſſential to every ſtate," inſomuch that you even queſtion whether it be *lawful* to be without one. So far, you think, is the church from having any dependence upon the ſtate, that the ſtate has not even "the property, or do-"minion," of any thing belonging to the church, being only the "guardian" of the revenues of the church, and holding them in truſt for its uſe. You, therefore, hold that the property of the church is unalienable, and not to be touched in any emergency of ſtate whatever. Religion, you maintain,

derives

derives its *eſtimation* and *effect*, from the riches and magnificence of its eſtabliſhment; that ſuch eſtabliſhment is calculated for *the multitude*, that it is peculiarly uſeful both to the poor and the rich, and, though neceſſary to all ſtates, is more proper for a *democratical*, than any other form of government.

Now, Sir, ſtrange as it may appear to you, my ideas, in all theſe reſpects, are the very reverſe of yours. Religion I conſider as a thing that requires no civil eſtabliſhment whatever, and that its beneficial operation is injured by ſuch eſtabliſhment, and the more in proportion to its riches. I am ſatisfied that ſuch an eſtabliſhment, inſtead of being any advantage, is a great incumbrance to a ſtate, and in general highly unfavourable to its liberties. Civil eſtabliſhments of chriſtianity were altogether unknown in the early ages, and gained ground by very ſlow degrees, as other corruptions and abuſes in the ſyſtem did. I am clearly of opinion, that the ſtate has a right to diſpoſe of *all* property within itſelf; that of the church, as well as of every thing elſe of a public nature; and that religion has naturally nothing at all to do with any particular form of civil government; being uſeful indeed to all perſons, the rich as well as the poor, but only as individuals.

Let us now trace our very different ideas to their proper ſource, and compare them with our common principles; and I am happy to find that we agree with reſpect to the proper uſe and advantage of government in general, which is a very material circumſtance in our diſcuſſion. "Government, "you ſay, p. 88, is a contrivance of human wiſ- "dom, to provide for human wants, and men have "a right that theſe wants be provided for by this "wiſdom."

You will not, however, ſay that *all* human wants are to be provided for by government; for it is manifeſtly only *ſome* of them that its great power can reach, and therefore much muſt be left to the individuals themſelves. This you allow, when you ſay, p. 87, whatever each man can ſeparately "do, without treſpaſſing upon others, he has a right "to do for himſelf." Since, then, I can *eat* and *drink* whatever ſuits my appetite, without treſpaſſing upon any body, you will allow that the ſtate has no buſineſs to preſcribe what I ſhall eat or drink, or when, or in what manner, I ſhall do it. I imagine, alſo, you will allow that my neighbours have no right to complain of me, if, when I am indiſpoſed, I treat myſelf as I think proper, taking whatever advice, or whatever medicines, I pleaſe. They may do the ſame, and I ſhall not complain

of

of them. Pray, then, what right, on this plain and obvious principle, advanced by yourſelf, has any man to complain of me if I *worſhip God* in what manner I pleaſe, or if I do not chuſe to worſhip God at all? Does my conduct in this reſpect injure them? What, then, has the ſtate, or my neighbours, to do in this buſineſs, any more than with my food or my medicine?

In this, and many other things, government has taken a great deal too much upon it; and has by this means brought itſelf into great and needleſs embarraſſments. In many things beſides the article of religion, men have buſied themſelves in *legiſlating* too much, and when it would have been better if individuals had been left to think and act for themſelves.

This, you will ſay, amounts to nothing more than a plea for *toleration* in matters of religion, which you are ready to allow. As a foundation for a *civil eſtabliſhment* of religion, you ſay that "man "is by his conſtitution a religious animal;" for all that follows in defence of eſtabliſhments, is immediately connected with *this*. Now, admitting this, which however is not true (becauſe we may eaſily conceive of a Being, poſſeſſed of all the eſſential properties of *human nature*, without any knowledge of religion at all) government can have no more right to interfere with reſpect to *this* conſtitutional

property of man, than with any other conſtitutional, or eſſential property; and with reſpect to many of theſe, you muſt allow that men ſhould be left to themſelves. For example, man is conſtitutionally and neceſſarily an *eating* and a *ſleeping* animal; but does it therefore follow that civil government has any thing to do with his eating or ſleeping? And if not, neither has it any right to preſcribe to him in matters of *religion*, merely becauſe he is by conſtitution a *religious animal*. Man is a *thinking* and *reaſoning* animal; but muſt all his thinking and reaſoning be ſubject to the control of the ſtate? Man has alſo been defined to be *animal riſibile*, but muſt we therefore never laugh but when our grave and wiſe governors ſhall give us leave? We often indulge ourſelves even in laughing at them.

As you do not deal much in *definitions*, or *axioms*, I am obliged to collect your idea of the *principle* on which church eſtabliſhments are founded, from caſual expreſſions, and the general ſcope of your declamation. Syſtematical divines, in this country, have, in different circumſtances of their affairs, advanced two very different principles, as the baſis of civil eſtabliſhments of religion. At firſt it was univerſally aſſerted that chriſtianity, and ſome particular form of it, ought to be eſtabliſhed, maintained, and protected, by the civil power, becauſe it was *true*; that it became the civil magiſtrate, as

the

the *vicegerent of God*, to ſtand up for the honour of God, and of his truth; ſo that it was of no conſequence at all what was the religion of his ſubjects. It was his duty to inforce *truth*, and to bring them as ſoon as he could to the profeſſion and due maintenance of it.

But when it was urged that civil magiſtrates were not always the beſt judges of religious truth, that they had often little leiſure for the ſtudy of religion, and were apt to be impoſed upon by prieſts, and others, whoſe intereſt it was to miſlead them; beſides that, upon this plan, the religion of every country, would be liable to be changed with every change of governors, as was the caſe in our own country, in ſeveral ſucceſſive reigns after that of Henry VIII. or rather Henry VII. this old ground was ſhifted; and of late it has been maintained by our high church divines, and by yourſelf, who muſt be claſſed with them, that the civil magiſtrate has nothing to do with the *truth* of religion, being obliged to provide for that which is profeſſed by the *majority* of the ſubjects, though he himſelf ſhould be of a different perſuaſion. Thus they ſay the king of Great Britain, muſt maintain epiſcopacy in England, and preſbyterianiſm in Scotland, whether he be a preſbyterian as king William, a Lutheran as George I. or a true churchman as his preſent Majeſty.

You,

You, Sir, appear to defend church eſtabliſhments on the latter of theſe principles. "The chriſtian "ſtateſman," you ſay, p. 151, "muſt firſt provide "for the multitude, becauſe it is the multitude, and "is therefore, as ſuch, the firſt object in the eccle-"ſiaſtical inſtitution, and in all inſtitutions." But how does this apply to the caſe of your country of Ireland. For the very ſame reaſon that epiſcopacy ought to be eſtabliſhed in England, and preſbyterianiſm in Scotland, the Roman catholic ought to be the eſtabliſhed religion of Ireland, becauſe, as I apprehend, it is unqueſtionably the religion of a very great majority of the inhabitants. As to the great maſs of the oppreſſed Iriſh, if they be aſked whether it be *their* religion, that which they really approve, that they are obliged to maintain, they will ſay it is a *foreign* one, one that they diſbelieve and deteſt, and yet are compelled to ſupport, whilſt from genuine zeal, they think it their duty to maintain their own. It is not ſuppoſed that more than one in ten of the inhabitants of Ireland are of the church of England, and yet the iron hand of power compels them to maintain it. Is this, think you, the way to recommend your religion? Judge by the effect. What converts have been made to it in the laſt two centuries? The zealous members of your church, in the reign of the

the two Charles's of bleſſed memory, impoſed epiſcopacy alſo upon Scotland, when not more than one in a hundred of the Scots would attend the ſervice; but the generous ſpirit of that nation at length threw off the oppreſſive yoke. The Iriſh alſo have the will, but, alas, not the power.

If you will have an eſtabliſhment, and act upon the principles that you profeſs, viz. to provide for the *multitude,* or the great maſs of the people, do you, of your own accord, change the eſtabliſhed religion of Ireland, to one more conſonant to the genius and wiſhes of the nation; and let it not be ſaid that the church of England would have the impudence, if it had the power, to collect its tithes from every country in chriſtendom, though every pariſh ſhould be a *ſinecure,* and all their biſhops be denominated *in partibus.* Let there be an appearance at leaſt, which now there is not, of ſome regard to *religion* in the caſe, and not to mere *revenue.* Often as I have urged this ſubject, and many as have been thoſe who have animadverted upon my writings, hardly any have touched upon *this.* They feel it to be tender ground. They can, however, keep an obſtinate ſilence, they can ſhut their ears, and turn their eyes to other objects, when it is not to their purpoſe to attend to this.

Admitting that religion muſt be *eſtabliſhed,* or ſupported by civil power, in order to its efficiency,

will

will *any* ſpecies of religion anſwer the purpoſe; the heathen, or the Mahometan, as well as the chriſtian, and one ſpecies of chriſtianity as well as another? Muſt we have no *diſcuſſion* concerning the nature, and influence, of the different kinds of religion, in order that, if we happen to have got a worſe, we may relieve ourſelves by ſubſtituting a better in its place? Muſt every thing once eſtabliſhed be, for that reaſon only, for ever maintained? This is ſaid, indeed, to be your maxim, openly avowed in the Houſe of Commons, and, it is perfectly agreeable to every thing advanced in this publication. For you condemn the French National Aſſembly, for innovating in *their* religion, which is Catholic, as much as you could blame the Engliſh Parliament, for innovating in *ours*, which is Proteſtant. You condemn them for lowering the ſtate of archbiſhops, biſhops, and abbots, though they have improved that of the lower orders of the clergy; and therefore you would, no doubt, be equally offended at any diminution of the power of cardinals, or of the pope. We may therefore preſume, that had you lived in Turkey, you would have been a mahometan, and in Tartary, a devout worſhipper of the grand lama.

To indulge myſelf in a mode of writing, which the peruſal of your work has in ſome meaſure led me to. Your mind has been ſo dazzled with the faſcinating idea of the *majeſty of the church* (a phraſe, I believe

I believe peculiar to yourſelf) that you have not been able to ſee any thing diſtinctly on the ſubject. You have not even dared to take a ſufficiently near view of this very church of which you are ſo profound an admirer, but have only gazed at a humble diſtance, or have ſtood with your face towards it, but with your eyes reverently fixed on the ground. Thus awe-ſtruck, you have not had the courage to look up, or to look round you. You have not even been able to diſtinguiſh, whether it was St. Paul's at London, St. Peter's at Rome, or the church of Sancta Sophia at Conſtantinople. For your deſcription applies equally to them all. It ſeems to have been ſufficient for you that it was not a *conventicle*.

As to every thing under *this* denomination, it has been your maxim, without any examination, to turn your back upon it. You would, no doubt, have done the ſame with reſpect to any place, in which Peter, or Paul, was permitted to preach; the chriſtian religion being in their time, unfortunately, nothing more than *a ſect*, taught in *conventicles*, and no where *authoriſed by law*. Had you lived at that time, you would, according to your general maxim, have "cheriſhed your old" heathen "prejudices, becauſe they were old," and have lived and died a humble worſhipper of the Gods,

and

and eſpecially the *Goddeſſes*, of ancient Greece and Rome.

I the leſs wonder at this power of imagination, and prejudice, and this ſtupefaction of all your rational faculties in matters of *religion*, as it is apparent that you have been under a ſimilar ſuſpenſion of your *reaſon*, and equally under the power of *imagination*, in your views of the principles of *civil government*. Such, Sir, is " your proud ſubmiſſion, and the ſubordination of your very heart," to *princes*, and *nobles*; ſuch your devotion to *rank* and *ſex*, in conjunction with your *religious enthuſiaſm*, that one might ſuſpect that your book was compoſed after ſome ſolemn vigil, ſuch as watching your arms at the ſhrine of the bleſſed virgin; after which you iſſued forth the champion, in form, of religion, of monarchy, and of the immaculate virtue of all handſome queens.

It is amuſing to ſee with what confidence, and with what various expreſſion, you deliver your ſentiments on the ſubject of theſe civil eſtabliſhments of religion, without diſtinguiſhing one from another. " This principle," you ſay, p. 147, " runs " through the whole ſyſtem of their" (the Britiſh) " policy. They do not conſider their church " eſtabliſhments as convenient, but as eſſential to " their ſtate, not as a thing heterogeneous and ſe-

" parable,

" parable, ſomething added for accommodation,
" what they may either keep up or lay aſide, ac-
" cording to their temporary ideas of convenience.
" They conſider it as the foundation of their whole
" conſtitution, with which, and with every part
" of which, it holds an indiſſoluble union. *Church*
" and *ſtate* are ideas inſeparable in their minds, and
" ſcarcely is the one ever mentioned, without men-
" tioning the other. It is on ſuch principles,
you ſay, " that the majority of the people of Eng-
" land, far from thinking a religious national eſta-
" bliſhment unlawful, hardly think it lawful to be
" without one. In France you are wholly miſ-
" taken if you do not believe us above all other
" things attached to it, and above all other na-
" tions."

Now you cannot be ſo little read in the hiſtory of England, as not to know that the *church* and the *ſtate* were as much connected before the Reformation as they have been ſince, and while the eſtabliſhment was preſbyterian, as well as now that it is epiſcopalian. You muſt know alſo that the inhabitants of this country, were at one time as zealous papiſts as they now are proteſtants, and yet they were brought to make a change in their eſtabliſhed religion, and that this was done without making any material change in the ſyſtem of civil government.

You muſt know that the preſbyterians in Scotland, and the epiſcopalians in England, have at this very time the ſame king and the ſame parliament. But how do theſe facts agree with your favourite idea of the inſeparable union of church and ſtate? What, then, is the foundation of the dread you have entertained of any *future* change in the religion of our country, when no harm, but, as all proteſtants think, much advantage, has been derived from *paſt* changes in it?

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

Of the Source of the Reſpect that is paid to Religion.

DEAR SIR,

THAT you make no difference between chriſtrianity and the civil eſtabliſhment of it, is evident from many parts of your performance, and that you conſider the *reſpect* which it commands, as intirely derived from the circumſtances of its eſtabliſhment, is equally evident. After repreſenting the importance of chriſtianity, as oppoſed to infidelity, you ſay, in a peculiar ſtrain of eloquence, p. 135, "If in the moment of riot, and in a drunken "delirium, from the hot ſpirit drawn out of the "alembic of hell, which in France is now ſo fu-"rioufly boiling, we ſhould uncover our naked-"neſs, by throwing off that chriſtian religion, "which has hitherto been our boaſt and comfort, "and one great ſource of civilization among us, "and among many other nations, we are appre-"henſive (being well aware that the mind will not "endure a void) that ſome uncough, pernicious,

" and degrading ſuperſtition might take place of it. " For that reaſon, before we take from our eſta- " bliſhment the *natural human means of eſtimation*, " and give it up to contempt, as you have done " (and in doing it have incurred the penalties you " well deſerve to ſuffer) we deſire that ſome other " may be preſented to us in the place of it. We " ſhall then form our judgment. On theſe ideas, " inſtead of quarrelling with eſtabliſhments, as ſome " do, who have made a philoſophy, and a religion, of " their hoſtility to ſuch inſtitutions, we cleave cloſely " to them. We are reſolved to keep an eſta- " bliſhed church, an eſtabliſhed monarchy, an " eſtabliſhed ariſtocracy, and an eſtabliſhed demo- " cracy, each in the degree it exiſts, and in no " greater."

It is evident from this paſſage (the whole of which is ſo ſublimely rhetorical, that I could not help tranſcribing it, though not abſolutely neceſſary to my purpoſe) that you conſider the chriſtian religion as having no *reſpectability*, or *effect*, without being *eſtabliſhed*, and that the *natural human means of the eſtimation* in which it is held, is the ſplendour and riches of ſuch an eſtabliſhment; and this will be ſtill more evident from ſome paſſages that I ſhall have occaſion to quote hereafter. Let us now conſider how this idea accords with the *principles* of chriſtianity, and the authentic *records* of it, which you

will allow to be contained in the books of the New Teſtament, and alſo with its well known ſubſequent *hiſtory*.

Did our Saviour gives his apoſtles any inſtructions about connecting his religion with civil power, as if it would ever ſtand in need of ſuch aid; or did the apoſtles, more fully inſtructed after his death and aſcenſion, give any intimation of this kind? On the contrary, our Saviour declared that *his kingdom was not of this world*, which muſt mean that it did not reſemble other kingdoms, in being ſupported by public taxes, and having its laws guarded by civil penalties. The apoſtles, and all chriſtian miniſters, for many centuries, lived on the voluntary contributions of their reſpective churches, and they had no means of enforcing their cenſures beſides excluſion from their ſocieties; and can you ſay that chriſtianity wanted any proper *eſtimation*, or *reſpectability*, in that period? Did it not abundantly recommend itſelf to every attentive candid obſerver, and to every impartial inquirer; and did it not by this means continually gain ground, notwithſtanding it was oppoſed both by all the temporal powers of the world, and by whatever was moſt ſplendid and faſcinating in the eſtabliſhed ſyſtems of heatheniſm? It was the *virtue*, it was the well known piety and extenſive benevolence, of the primitive chriſtians, and not wealth or power, that procured

reſpect to themſelves, and to their cauſe. Read only the letters of the Emperor Julian, and you cannot but be ſenſible of this. To this, and to this alone, *he* aſcribed the reſpect that was then paid to chriſtianity, and the progreſs it had made in the world.

If you ſuppoſe, as you really ſeem to do, that chriſtianity is now deſtitute of theſe proper *means of eſtimation*, you know little of its nature or power. The *truths* and the *promiſes* of the goſpel are the ſame now that they ever were, nor is its *evidence* at all diminiſhed; and *human nature*, on which it operates, you will not doubt, is alſo the ſame. And if you could look at any thing out of an eſtabliſhment, you might ſee that chriſtianity even now produces as diſintereſted and heroic virtue as ever it did. It forms men alike for the moſt active uſefulneſs, or the moſt patient ſuffering. But amuſing yourſelf with the *ſhadow*, you wholly neglect the *ſubſtance*. Looking at *religion*, you ſee nothing but the civil eſtabliſhments of it. Thus have I ſometimes ſeen an aged *oak* ſo completely covered with a luxuriant *ivy*, that it required ſome attention to diſcern any thing elſe.

That wealth and ſplendour have not the charms that you aſcribe to them with the bulk of mankind, is evident even from the hiſtory of *Monachiſm*, one of the corruptions of chriſtianity. The firſt monks were not

not attracted by magnificent monaſteries, and highly ornamented churches, but were moſt numerous, when they had nothing but the deſerts to retire to. Then alſo were they the moſt reſpected; and they did not ſink into contempt till they had acquired what you call the *natural human means of eſtimation.* The ſame has been the caſe with the ſecular clergy, in all countries. They were infinitely more reſpected, even by the rich and the great, while they were poor, than they have ever been ſince they have got their preſent ſplendid eſtabliſhments; nor is it difficult to ſee the cauſe of this, and how it operates. Eaſe, affluence, and power, attract perſons who have no ſenſe or knowledge of religion; and when mere *men of the world* get eccleſiaſtical preferment, they will, of courſe, diſgrace their profeſſion by their vices. It was the unbounded luxury, profligacy, and arrogance, of the court of Rome, poſſeſſed, as you think, of every natural human means of eſtimation, that was one of the principal cauſes of the reformation.

According to your maxims, a rich eſtabliſhment ſhould make its clergy more reſpected than a poor one. But does this appear to be the caſe, on the compariſon of the ſtate of the clergy in Scotland, with that of thoſe in this country? Dr. Adam Smith, who well knew them both, was of a very different opinion; and the moſt ſuperficial obſerver muſt be

ſenſible that he is in the right. Nay, ſo unfortunate is the ſituation of the clergy in this country (for it cannot be any thing, but their *ſituation*, *men* being the ſame in all countries) that, by the confeſſion of many perſons in the eſtabliſhment itſelf, there are no clergy in chriſtendom more negligent of their proper duty, leſs ſtrict in their morals, and conſequently *more deſpiſed*, than they are. Biſhop Burnet, who had been much abroad, and who was an attentive obſerver, was decidedly of this opinion; and the character of the Engliſh clergy in general, is little, if at all, improved ſince his time.

The manner in which your imagination is ſtruck with a ſplendid church eſtabliſhment, makes you even exceed yourſelf in *eloquence*; and, as I always admire you in this field, though not in that of ſober *reaſoning*, I cannot forbear quoting a pretty long paragraph to this purpoſe, as it is particularly excellent in its kind. "He," you ſay, p. 146, "who gave "our nature to be perfected by our virtue, willed "alſo the neceſſary means of its perfection. He "willed therefore the ſtate. He willed its connec- "tion with the ſource and original archetype of all "perfection" (meaning, no doubt, *the church*, equally the archetype of all perfection in Indoſtan, in Turkey, in Italy, in England, and even in Scotland) "They who are convinced of this his will, "which is the law of laws, and the ſovereign of "ſovereigns,

" ſovereigns, cannot think it reprehenſible that this " our corporate fealty and homage, that this our " recognition of a ſigniory paramount, I had almoſt " ſaid this oblation of the ſtate itſelf, as a worthy " offering on the high altar of univerſal praiſe, " ſhould be performed, as all public ſolemn acts are " performed, in buildings, in muſic, in decoration, " in ſpeech, in the dignity of perſons, according to " the cuſtoms of mankind, taught by their nature; " that is, with modeſt ſplendour, with unaſſuming " ſtate, with mild majeſty, and ſober pomp. For " thoſe purpoſes they think ſome part of the wealth " of the country is as uſefully employed as it can " be in fomenting the luxury of individuals. It is " the public conſolation. It nouriſhes the public " hope. The pooreſt man finds his own impor- " tance and dignity in it, whilſt the wealth and " pride of individuals at every moment makes the " man of humble rank and fortune ſenſible of his " inferiority, and degrades and villifies his condition. " It is for the man in humble life, and to raiſe his " nature, and put him in mind of a ſtate in which " the privileges of opulence will ceaſe, when he will " be equal by nature, and may be more than equal " by virtue, that this portion of the general wealth " of his country is employed and ſanctified."

Big with theſe ideas, you ſay, p. 153, " as the " maſs of any deſcription of men are but men, and

" their poverty" (namely that of the clergy) " can-
" not be voluntary, that diſreſpect which attends
" upon all lay-poverty will not depart from the
" eccleſiaſtical. Our conſtitution has therefore
" taken care, that thoſe who are to inſtruct preſump-
" tuous ignorance, thoſe who are to be cenſors over
" inſolent vice, ſhould neither incur their contempt,
" nor live upon their alms; nor will it tempt the
" rich to a neglect of the true medicine of their
" minds. For theſe reaſons, while we provide firſt
" for the poor, with a parental ſolicitude, we have
" not relegated religion, like ſomething we were
" aſhamed to ſhew, to obſcure municipalities, or
" ruſtic villages. No; we will have her to exalt
" her mitred front in courts and parliaments. We
" will have her mixed throughout the whole maſs
" of life, and blended with all the claſſes of ſo-
" ciety. The people of England will ſhew to the
" haughty potentates of the world, and to their
" talking ſophiſters, that a free, a generous, and in-
" formed nation, honours the high magiſtrates of
" its church, that it will not ſuffer the inſolence
" of wealth and titles, or any other ſpecies of proud
" pretenſion, to look down with ſcorn upon what
" they look up to with reverence, nor preſume to
" trample on that acquired perſonal nobility which
" they intend always to be, and which often is, the
" fruit, not the reward (for what can be the re-
" ward)

" ward) of learning, piety, and virtue. They can " ſee without pain or grudging an archbiſhop pre- " cede a duke. They can ſee a biſhop of Dur- " ham, or a biſhop of Wincheſter, in poſſeſſion " of ten thouſand pounds a year, &c. &c. &c."

Pray, Sir, on what part of the New Teſtament are theſe paragraphs a comment? Alas, it is the *wiſdom of the world*, which *is fooliſhneſs with God*, and even with ſerious and ſenſible men? The wealth of the clergy, of which you are ſo proud, and the temporal power with which you have inveſted them, is the natural ſource of their corruption, and what muſt ever ſink them, and religion into contempt. Has the ſplendour of the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment in France, which is much ſuperior to any thing of the kind in this country, prevented the ſpread of the Reformation on the one hand, or of infidelity on the other? By your own account, France is almoſt a nation of infidels, at leaſt their National Aſſembly, in your idea, conſiſts chiefly of them. Have the remains of this ſplendour, reſpectable ſtill in your eyes, prevented the rejection of chriſtianity altogether *here*? If you know the world, and even what paſſes at home, you muſt know the contrary. Infidelity has made conſiderable progreſs in this country, and eſpecially in the upper claſſes of life, perſons to whom you imagine the wealth of the clergy would naturally recommend

commend their religion. But theſe men do not frequent your churches, and they regard your eſtabliſhment no farther than they can avail themſelves of its emoluments, as it is a means of providing for their younger ſons and brothers. If the Houſes of Lords and Commons were fairly polled, after voting according to their *real opinion*, whether, think you, would the majority be in favour of chriſtianity, or againſt it? Many, and thoſe not inattentive obſervers, think the latter.

If riches and power have the charms which you aſcribe to them in the buſineſs of religion, how came the *Reformation* to take place? The power and ſplendour of the church of Rome was at its height in the time of Luther and his followers; yet without any aid of this kind to oppoſe it, in Germany, in this country, or in Scotland, it gave way to the efforts of men who had no advantage but what they derived from reaſon and piety. Surely, Sir, the bulk of mankind do not ſee with your eyes. If they did, how can you account for the great number of Diſſenters in this country, from the time of Queen Elizabeth (who had the ſame ideas that you have on theſe ſubjects) down to the preſent time; and what can be the cauſe of the amazing increaſe of methodiſm? Neither their miniſters nor ours are rich. We have not the ſtyle of *my lord*, nor have we ſeats in parliament. But, deſtitute as we are

of

of all theſe advantages, I will venture to ſay, that our miniſters, as a body, are much more reſpected by their congregations than yours, poſſeſſed, in your idea, of all the *natural human means of eſtimation.*

Judging of us by yourſelves, you naturally ſuppoſe, that it is only through *envy* and *malignity*, that we declaim againſt the wealth and the power of the clergy. "In England," you ſay, p. 155, "moſt "of us conceive that it is envy and malignity to- "wards thoſe who are often the beginners of their "own fortune, and not a love of the ſelf-denial "and mortification of the ancient church, that "makes ſome look aſkance at the diſtinctions, and "honours, and revenues, which, taken from no per- "ſon, are ſet apart for virtue. The ears of the peo- "ple of England are diſtinguiſhing. They hear "theſe men ſpeak broad. Their tongue be- "trays them. Their language is in the *patois* of "fraud, in the cant and gibberiſh of hypocriſy. "The people of England muſt think ſo when theſe "praters affect to carry back the clergy to that pri- "mitive evangelic poverty, which in the ſpirit, "ought always to exiſt in *them* (and in *us* too, how- "ever we may like it) but in the thing muſt be va- "ried, when the relation of that body to the ſtate "is altered, when manners, when modes of life, "when indeed the whole order of human affairs, "has undergone a total revolution. We ſhall be-

lieve

" lieve theſe reformers to be then *honeſt enthuſiaſts*,
" not, as now we think them, *cheats* and *deceivers*,
" when we ſee them throwing their own goods into
" common, and ſubmitting their own perſons to
" the auſtere diſcipline of the early church."

This, Sir, is a paragraph of which it is to be hoped you will ſome time hence be aſhamed. You do not give us the alternative of being either *knaves* or *fools*. You will not allow us any place in this more reſpectable, or rather leſs contemptible, claſs of men. None of us who diſapprove of eſtabliſhments, Dr. Price, or myſelf, can have the honour of being ranked with *honeſt enthuſiaſts*. We are all abſolutely, and without a ſingle exception, *cheats* and *deceivers*, that is, perſons who are ſaying one thing, and at the ſame time meaning another. But we are happy in an appeal from your judgment, as you are from ours; though, judging from myſelf, we are by no means diſpoſed to cenſure you with ſo much ſeverity as you do us. I do not ſay that we are ſo mortified to the world, as that the good things with which you tempt us, have no charms for us. We are *men*, and have the feelings of men, as well as yourſelves. But if they ſtruck our imagination as forcibly as they do yours, and if we were the *knaves* and *hypocrites* that you ſuppoſe us to be, why do we not make greater efforts to obtain them? The market is open, but we do not chuſe to give the

price.

price. If theſe things be acceſſible to *ſome*, they are no doubt to *others*, in proportion to their ability or intereſt, or whatever it be that aſſiſts their preferment.

As to ſubſcription to your articles, &c. if I be ſuch a perſon as you have deſcribed, why might not I declare my *unfeigned aſſent and conſent* to them, as well as others? Beſides, if the advantages of an eſtabliſhment were the things that we are aiming at, why are we labouring at the ſubverſion of all eſtabliſhments, expoſing their inutility, and even their miſchievous nature and tendency? If the tree be cut down, how are we to live upon the fruit of it? And there are now, I believe, very few Diſſenters, who, if the preſent eſtabliſhment was overturned, would wiſh to ſubſtitute any other in its place.

Your idea of the ſtate of things in the primitive church is altogether founded on miſtake. It was not, from the firſt, materially different from what it is, or at leaſt ought to be, at this day, and therefore did not require any great difference in the condition of its ordinary miniſters. There never was any obligation on chriſtians as you ſeem to ſuppoſe, to *throw their goods into common*. Whatever was done of this kind, appears from the hiſtory of Ananias and Sapphira, to have been perfectly voluntary, and could not have been univerſal;

and

and we read of no ſuch thing in any of the gentile churches. Theſe, from the firſt, conſiſted of *rich* and *poor* and the rich among them made repeated contributions to relieve the poor chriſtians at Jeruſalem, which could not have been wanted, if all the rich, even there, had give their *all*. As to the *diſcipline* of the primitive church, it was ſuch as I ſhould have no objection to, but have ſtrongly recommended in my *Eſſay on Church Diſcipline*; nor was it more ſtrict than is actually exerciſed in ſeveral chriſtian churches, though not in that of England, at this day. But of theſe things you, Sir, ſeem to ſpeak altogether at random, without any particular knowledge of the ſubject.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

Of a civil Eſtabliſhment being eſſential to Chriſtianity.

DEAR SIR,

IF a civil eſtabliſhment be ſo eſſential as you repreſent it, to the eſtimation and effect of chriſtianity, you muſt, no doubt, imagine that it never exiſted without one, that it has *grown with its growth, and ſtrengthened with its ſtrength.* Hence your apprehenſion that, if any thing affect the one, it muſt in proportion affect the other, and that they muſt both ſtand or fall together. Now, being yourſelf nothing more than a *Lay divine* (as you contemptuouſly characteriſe a perſon of eminence, who has preſumed to *hint* at ſome improvements in your favourite ſyſtem, not calculated to overturn, but to ſtrengthen it) I, whom, together with Dr. Price, you will claſs, p. 13, among *political theologians*, and *theological politicians*, ſhall give you a little information on the ſubject. Your talents, no doubt, are great; but what are talents, or powers of reaſoning, and combining particular

facts

facts into ſyſtems, if a man have no facts to combine, no proper knowledge of his ſubject? In this caſe his greater ingenuity will only ſerve to miſlead him, and fix him in error. And it is very evident that, whatever has been the compaſs of your ſtudies, *eccleſiaſtical hiſtory* has not been within its range; and facts, notorious facts, ſuch as lie upon the very face and ſurface of it, unfortunately overturn your whole ſyſtem.

You have not been pleaſed to give us the definition of an *eſtabliſhed church*, though you enlarge ſo much in your encomiums upon it; but in this we cannot much diſagree. In its full extent, it is a church defended, and even regulated, by the ſtate, which either wholly proſcribes, tolerates, or barely connives at, other religions. Now, what was the ſituation of the chriſtian church with reſpect to the State in the primitive times? You muſt know that, ſo far from being ſupported by the civil powers (which were then either Jewiſh or Heathen) it was frowned upon by them, and violently perſecuted; itſelf being at that time nothing more than a *ſect*, or a *hereſy*, ſometimes connived at, but never openly tolerated; and yet in theſe circumſtances it exiſted, and flouriſhed, gradually gaining ground by its own evidence, till it triumphed over all oppoſition, and the Roman empire itſelf became chriſtian.

What

What was it that theſe chriſtian emperors then did for their religion? They did little or nothing towards its *ſupport*, becauſe they found it ſufficiently ſupported by the voluntary contributions and benefactions of its friends. They did, however, *what they ought not to have done*; they influenced the deciſions of councils, and enforced them by temporal pains and penalties. The State alſo protected property given or bequeathed to the church, as well as that which was appropriated to other uſes; but there was nothing like a *tax* levied for the ſupport of religion for many ages, nor is there any ſuch thing at this day in a very great part of the chriſtian world. Tithes are comparatively but a modern invention, the payment of them being firſt voluntary, and afterwards obligatory; and the compulſory payment of tithes did not take place in the whole of this country till the time of King John, of *glorious and immortal memory*, on that account. There are now no tithes paid in the eccleſiaſtical ſtates of Italy, or in Sicily; and though, as I have been lately informed, there is what is called tithe in ſome parts of Lombardy, it does not in general exceed one thirtieth part of the produce, and is never one tenth.

Another important article in *our* eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, is the right of our kings to the no-

mination of biſhops*. But it is well known, that the right of chuſing the biſhops was originally, and for many centuries, in their reſpective churches, the metropolitans of a province ſhewing their approbation by joining in the ordination; and that even the emperors themſelves, after they became chriſtians, never aſſumed any ſuch authority. It was firſt uſurped by the popes, in the plenitude of their power, and by the feudal princes of Europe, in conſequence of their inveſting biſhops with their *temporalities*, and making them *lords of territory*. The National Aſſembly of France have, to their immortal honour (though they ſhould be diſſolved to-morrow, and never meet again) reſtored to all the chriſtian churches in that country, their original right of appointing their own paſtors, both the ordinary clergy and the biſhops.

As to the claim of our princes to be the *heads of the church* (which is an uſurpation from an uſurper, the pope) and that of our parliament, to enact what ſhall be deemed *articles of faith*, and to give a form and conſtitution to the whole church, it is a thing not ſo much as pretended to

* This is done in England by the king iſſuing a *Congé d'Elire* to the chapters of each cathedral, impowering them to chuſe ſuch perſons only as are named to them; but in Ireland it is done without this form.

by

by any other temporal power in the world, and a greater abſurdity and abuſe than any thing ſubſiſting in the ſyſtem of popery, where at leaſt the judges in eccleſiaſtical affairs are eccleſiaſtical perſons.

The whole ſyſtem of the civil eſtabliſhment of religion had its origin at a time when neither *religion* nor *civil government* was much underſtood. It was the conſequence of the feudal ſtates of Europe becoming chriſtian in an age where we find little of chriſtianity, beſides the *name*; its genuine *doctrines* and its *ſpirit* having equally diſappeared.

Every article, therefore, within the compaſs of the civil eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity, is evidently an *innovation*; and as ſyſtems are reformed by reverting to their firſt principles, chriſtianity can never be reſtored to its priſtine ſtate, and recover its real dignity and efficiency, till it be diſengaged from all connexion with civil power. This eſtabliſhment, therefore, may be compared to a *fungus*, or a *paraſitical plant*, which is ſo far from being coeval with the tree on which it has faſtened itſelf, that it ſeized upon it in its weak and languid ſtate, and if it be not cut off in time, will exhauſt all its juices, and deſtroy it.

Writing to an orator, I naturally think of metaphors and compariſons, and therefore I will give you two or three more. So far is a civil eſtabliſhment from being friendly to chriſtianity, that it may be com-

pared to the animal, called the *Sloth*, which, when it gets upon any tree, will not leave it till it has devoured even the leaves and the bark, ſo that it preſently periſhes, Rather, it is the animal called a *Glutton*, which falling from a tree (in which it generally conceals itſelf) upon ſome noble animal, immediately begins to tear it, and ſuck its blood; and if it be not ſoon ſhaken off (which ſometimes every effort fails to effect) it infallibly kills its prey.

Now, when I ſee this *fungus* of an *eſtabliſhment* upon the noble plant of *chriſtianity*, draining its beſt juices; when I ſee this *Sloth* upon its ſtately branches, gnawing it, and ſtripping it bare; or, to change my compariſon, when I ſee the *Glutton* upon the ſhoulders of this noble animal, the blood flowing down, and its very vitals in danger; if I wiſh to preſerve the tree, or the animal, muſt I not, without delay, extirpate the fungus, deſtroy the Sloth, and kill the Glutton. Indeed, Sir, ſay, or write, what you pleaſe, ſuch vermin deſerve no mercy. You may ſtand by, and weep for the fate of your favourite fungus, your Sloth, or your Glutton, but I ſhall not ſpare them.

In your idea, a civil eſtabliſhment is the very *baſis*, or *foundation* of religion. But when any ſtructure is to be raiſed, the foundation is the firſt thing that is laid; whereas this was evidently the very laſt. Inſtead, therefore, of its being the *foundation*,

or

or even the *buttreſs*, it may rather be ſaid to reſemble the heavy *ſtone roof*, preſſing with an enormous weight upon the walls, which on that account require many buttreſſes to ſupport it, and after all proves to be ſo heavy, and is now become ſo ruinous, that it will be found abſolutely neceſſary to take it all down, if the building is to be preſerved. Nay, as in the late taking down of the ſtone roof of the cathedral, I think, of Hereford, if the greateſt care be not taken, the attempt to meddle with this cumbrous roof will be hazardous, both to thoſe who remove it, and thoſe who ſtand near it.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER IX.

Of the Uſes of civil Eſtabliſhments of Religion.

DEAR SIR,

YOU certainly magnify the benefits derived from religion itſelf too much, valuable as I allow it to be, when you ſay, p. 134, "We know, "and what is better, we feel, that religion is the "baſis of civil ſociety, and the ſource of all good "and of all comfort." Here, ſurely, is more of the *rhetorician* than of the *reaſoner*, even ſuppoſing you not to mean, what you evidently do, the civil eſtabliſhment of religion, but religion itſelf. Is there no good, or comfort, in any thing but religion, or what flows from it? Will religion feed or cloath us; or is there no comfort in food or cloathing? Is it not poſſible to make many wholeſome laws to prevent men from injuring one another, and is it not poſſible to execute thoſe laws, ſo as to preſerve the *peace of ſociety*, which I conceive to be the proper end of civil government, without calling in the aid of religion; or cannot religion operate in aid of good laws, without the help of the magiſtrate?

Civil

Civil eſtabliſhments of religion, muſt, however, be imagined to be of *ſome uſe* to ſociety, or it will be of little conſequence to defend them at all. If the church, or the king, have nothing but *divine right* to ſtand upon, the people, ſeeing their own intereſt to be out of the queſtion, would not, at this day, ſhew much zeal in their ſupport. They muſt, if poſſible, be made to believe, that a ſyſtem ſupported by their money, and the ſweat of their brows, is, in ſome way or other, directly or indirectly, for their advantage. Accordingly, you, Sir, have found it neceſſary to urge the *utility* of theſe eſtabliſhments, and according to you, this utility is threefold. They are of uſe to *the poor*, and to *the rich*, and though they ſuit all governments, they are more particularly neceſſary in *democratical ones*.

"The chriſtian ſtateſmen," you ſay, p. 151, "of "this land have been taught, that the circumſtance "of the goſpel's being preached to the poor, was "one of the great teſts of its true miſſion. They "think, therefore, that thoſe do not believe it who "do not take care it ſhould be preached to the "poor."

Here, Sir, your argument, as far as there is any thing of argument in it, is, that ſince the poor cannot afford to pay for religious inſtruction, the ſtate ſhould provide it for them. A very pious and charitable deſign, no doubt; but at whoſe expence

is this proviſion made? If it were at the expence of the rich only, there would be ſomething of charity in it; but is not all property, that of the poor as well as that of the rich, taxed alike for this purpoſe? Do not the clergy exact the payment of *ſmall tithes*, and often with the utmoſt rigour, from their pooreſt pariſhioners? Do we not ſometimes hear of their being actually turned out of their little tenements, by a diſtreſs levied by their ſpiritual inſtructors; and are not the poor Iriſh, ſome of the moſt deſtitute and miſerable of mankind, driven into almoſt annual rebellions, by oppreſſion from the exaction of tithes?

This, I am told, is the true cauſe of the riſe of thoſe who are called *White Boys*, among the poor catholics of Ireland; and nothing but the terror of military execution, can compel them to pay for that inſtruction which you would give us to underſtand is ſo charitably afforded them. Thus, to be compelled to pay for the inſtruction which they deteſt, and receive no advantage from, and to be, at the ſame time, under another kind of neceſſity of paying for the inſtruction which they really value, is, indeed, a hard caſe. But this, according to you, is *preaching the goſpel to the poor*.

The goſpel was, in its proper ſenſe, preached to the poor by our Saviour, the apoſtles, and other primitive chriſtians, who were themſelves poor.

In thoſe times, all the contributions for the maintenance of public worſhip were made by the rich, and they were as ample as they were voluntary. Thoſe who were leſs opulent gave as they thought proper, and could afford, and the poor gave nothing; for ſmall tithes were then unknown. The ſame is the caſe with us Diſſenters. All our places of public worſhip are open to the poor, as well as to the rich; and not only are the poor accommodated *gratis*, but their wants are attended to as far the funds of the congregation (and in all of them there is one for this purpoſe) can go towards their relief.

The inſtruction of the poor is more attended to by the Methodiſts than by any other claſs of chriſtians in this country. They not only make them welcome, but they ſeek out, they invite, and preſs them to receive inſtruction; and if thoſe of them, who are comparatively poor, tax themſelves for the maintainance of their preachers, and the building of their places of worſhip, it is in ſuch a manner as promotes induſtry, and checks profligacy and extravagance. By this means, becoming more ſober, and more frugal, they grow comparatively rich, and are better able to contribute their penny, their two-pence, or their ſix-pence a week, to ſupply the wants of others. I honour their wiſdom and œconomy, and think moſt highly of thoſe perſons

whoſe

whoſe education and habits diſpoſe and enable them to adapt themſelves to the inſtruction of the loweſt and pooreſt of the vulgar. They are civilizing and chriſtianizing that part of the community, which is below the notice of your dignified clergy, but whoſe ſouls, as the common phraſe is, are as *precious in the ſight of God*, as thoſe who are called *their betters*. Such men will have their reward in heaven. I only wiſh they had more knowledge, and more charity along with their zeal; and *theſe* alſo will come in due time.

You think it equally neceſſary, that public proviſion ſhould be made for the inſtruction of the *rich*, and that, in order to engage their attention and reſpect, the civil eſtabliſhment of religion ſhould be ſplendid. "Such ſublime principles," you ſay, p. 137, "ought to be infuſed into perſons in ex-
"alted ſituations, and religious eſtabliſhments pro-
"vided, that may continually revive and enforce
"them. The people of England," you ſay, p. 152,
"know how little influence the teachers of religion
"are likely to have with the wealthy and power-
"ful of long ſtanding, and how much leſs weight
"with the newly fortunate, if they appear no way
"aſſorted to thoſe with whom they muſt aſſociate,
"and over whom they muſt even exerciſe in ſome
"caſes ſomething like an authority. What muſt
"they think of that body of teachers, if they ſee

"it

" it in no part above the eſtabliſhment of their do-
" meſtic ſervants?"

On the effect of ſplendid eſtabliſhments on the minds of men I have enlarged before, and ſhall now only obſerve that, through groſs inattention to the principles of human nature, you have neither conſidered the effect of the ſituation in which you have placed the clergy of this country on their own minds, or on thoſe of the rich and the great, to whom their miniſtry is to be adapted. Is it not a fact, that, ſo far from the former being independent of the latter, in conſequence of having great emolument in continual proſpect (which is the caſe of all the clergy, the biſhops themſelves not excepted) that they muſt continually look up to them, and court them, in order to advance themſelves? Is not their attention to the great in general extremely ſervile and debaſing? Have you never heard of their conniving at, rather than reproving them for, their vices and extravagancies, while they have the care of their education at home, and abroad. Is not almoſt every clergyman, whoſe talents or connexions encourage him to aſpire to a biſhopric, or any other great preferment, ready to adopt the maxims, and court the favour, of the great, in whoſe power alone it is to aid their views? Is it not notorious that the biſhops in general fall in with the meaſures of the court, whatever they are, evidently becauſe they

cannot

cannot riſe higher, or provide for their dependants, by any other means? For whenever the maxims and meaſures of the court change, the conduct of the biſhops almoſt univerſally, and even inſtantly, changes with them.

When, after the Court was diſpoſed to favour us, the diſſenting miniſters waited, by appointment, upon an archbiſhop, in order to get his vote and intereſt for relief in the matter of ſubſcription, which was then under conſideration in parliament, after both himſelf and his brethren had voted againſt us upon a former occaſion, he aſſured them that, though their bench had concurred in rejecting their application before, it was no meaſure of *theirs*, but that they had been *put upon it* by the king's miniſters. This he evidently thought a ſufficient apology for his own conduct, and that of his brethren. So valid did this excuſe appear to him, that he had no feeling of the diſhonour which ſuch conduct reflected upon the whole bench, and what a deſpicable idea he was giving of himſelf, and of his brethren to us Diſſenters, who are uſed to think and act for ourſelves, and not as we are *put upon* by others. Can ſuch conduct as this, which the ſituation of your dignified clergy neceſſarily leads them into, inſpire perſons of high rank, or of any rank, with ſentiments of *reſpect?* I will venture to ſay it is impoſſible. Pretend what you will, you muſt,

and

and you do, hold them in contempt, as much as we do ourſelves. It is the feeling of indignant honour. It is the natural ſentiment of man towards his degraded fellow creature, which in ſome meaſure reflects diſhonour upon himſelf, as being of the ſame ſpecies.

You, who are a *lay divine*, farther teach us, that civil eſtabliſhments of religion are peculiarly uſeful in free governments. "The conſecration of the "ſtate," you ſay, p. 137, "by a ſtate religi- "ous eſtabliſhment, is neceſſary alſo to operate "with an wholeſome awe upon free citizens, be- "cauſe, in order to ſecure their freedom, they muſt "enjoy ſome determinate portion of power. To "them, therefore, a religion connected with the "ſtate, and with their duty towards it, becomes "even more neceſſary, than in ſuch ſocieties where "the people, by the terms of their ſubjection, are "confined to private ſentiments, and the manage- "ment of their own family concerns. All perſons "poſſeſſing any portion of power, ought to be "ſtrongly and awfully impreſſed with an idea that "they act in truſt, and that they are to account for "their conduct in that truſt to the one great maſ- "ter, author, and founder, of ſociety. This prin- "ciple ought even to be more ſtrongly impreſſed "upon the minds of thoſe who compoſe the col- "lective ſovereignty, than upon thoſe of ſingle "princes.

" princes. Without inſtruments, theſe princes can " do nothing. Whoever uſes inſtruments, in find- " ing helps, finds alſo impediments. Their power, " therefore, is by no means complete, nor are they " ſafe in extreme abuſe.——But where popular " authority is abſolute and unreſtrained, the people " have an infinitely greater, becauſe a far better " founded, confidence in their own power.—It is " therefore of infinite importance that they ſhould " not be ſuffered to imagine that their will, any " more than that of kings, is the ſtandard of right " and wrong, &c. &c."

In all this, Sir, you, as uſual, confound *religion* with the *civil eſtabliſhment* of it, and hence the manifeſt inconcluſiveneſs of your whole argument. Religion, no doubt, is uſeful to all men, of all ranks, in power, or ſubject to it, as it furniſhes an additional motive to good behaviour in every ſituation. But what has this to do with any civil eſtabliſhment of it, with its being maintained by the ſtate, the officers of which ſtate, will, of courſe, have the ſole power of eccleſiaſtical as well as civil preferment? How will the members of a popular aſſembly be overawed by the admonitions of men whoſe ſalaries are ſettled, and whoſe places are diſpoſed of, by themſelves, any more than a ſingle arbitrary ſovereign? Will not the clergy always look up to that power, which has preferment at its diſpoſal,

poſal, in whatever hands it be lodged? Are not the eſtabliſhed miniſters in Holland advocates for their republican government, as much as the Engliſh biſhops of this day for the limited monarchy of England, and as much as the biſhops of Charles I. and II. were for abſolute monarchy, paſſive obedience, and non-reſiſtance?

The clergy, or any other ſet of men, in the pay of a ſtate, ſoon perceive what are the maxims of the governing powers in that ſtate, and readily adopt them. Are not the aſpiring clergy of the preſent reign, advocates for higher maxims of government in church and ſtate, than thoſe of the two preceding reigns? the fact is evident, and the difference is to be looked for in the different diſpoſitions of the courts. The former were liberal, and favourable to diſſenters, whereas the preſent is leſs ſo. This alone accounts for the whole. If the governors of any country in which religion is eſtabliſhed, have no motives to ſtand in awe of the miniſters of religion, which they evidently have not (as they always ſee the miniſters of religion ſtanding in awe of *them*, and courting them) it is of no uſe to them that it is eſtabliſhed at all. If it be of any uſe, it is ſimply as *religion*, as a principle operating upon conſcience, and influencing individuals, independently of any civil eſtabliſhment of it.

Indeed,

Indeed, Sir, you ſee this whole buſineſs in a very wrong point of light. The civil eſtabliſhment of religion is ſo far from making it reſpectable, that it is the very thing that makes it contemptible; becauſe it naturally tends to debaſe the minds of thoſe who officiate in it, thoſe to whom men will commonly look for examples of its proper ſpirit and tendency, and by whoſe principles and conduct they are too apt to form their opinion of it.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER X.

Of an Elective Clergy.

DEAR SIR,

THE dread you expreſs of the clergy of this country becoming *elective*, is extreme, and the conſequences which you imagine to flow from a regulation of this kind in the conſtitution of the church, you exhibit in the moſt alarming light. I ſhall ſelect the following, as ſome of the ſtrongeſt paſſages in your publication upon this ſubject, and I ſhall then make a few remarks upon them.

" The preſent ruling power" (viz. of France) " has" you ſay, p. 217, " made a degrading, pen-
" ſionary eſtabliſhment, to which no man of li-
" beral ideas, or liberal condition, will deſtine his
" children. It muſt ſettle into the loweſt claſſes of
" the people. As with you, the inferior clergy
" are not numerous enough for their duty, as theſe
" duties are beyond meaſure, minute and toilſome;
" as you have left no middle claſſes of clergy at their
" eaſe, in future nothing of ſcience or erudition,
" can exiſt in the Gallican church. To complete
" the project, without the leaſt attention to the

" rights of patrons, the Aſſembly has provided in " future an elective clergy; an arrangement which " will drive out of the clerical profeſſion all men " of ſobriety, all who can pretend to independence " in their function or their conduct, and which " will throw the whole direction of the public " mind into the hands of a ſet of licentious, bold, " crafty, factious, flattering wretches, of ſuch " condition, and ſuch habits of life, as will make " their contemptible penſions (in compariſon of " which the ſtipend of an exciſeman is lucrative " and honourable) an object of low and illiberal " intrigue."

" In ſhort," you ſay, p. 218, " it ſeems to me, " that this new eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment is in- " tended only to be temporary, and preparatory to " the utter abolition, under any of its forms, of the " chriſtian religion, whenever the minds of men " are prepared for this laſt ſtroke againſt it, by the " accompliſhment of the plan for bringing its mi- " niſters into univerſal contempt. I hope," you add, p. 219, " their partizans in England, will " ſucceed neither in the pillage of the eccleſiaſtics, " nor in the introduction of a principle of popu- " lar election to our biſhoprics and parochial " cures. This, in the preſent condition of the " world, would be the laſt corruption of the church, " the utter ruin of the clerical character, the moſt

" dangerous

"dangerous ſhock that the ſtate ever received "through a miſunderſtood arrangement of re- "ligion."

Now, Sir, had you reflected ever ſo little on *the nature of the caſe*, had you read *eccleſiaſtical hiſtory*, or had you opened your eyes to *exiſting facts*, ſuch as almoſt obtrude themſelves upon the moſt careleſs obſerver every day, you muſt have perceived that an *elective clergy* muſt have, always has had, and at this preſent time actually has, effects the very reverſe of thoſe with which your *imagination* (for here *judgment* is totally out of the queſtion) is haunted.

Is it not true that, in all caſes of a *civil* nature, every perſon who receives a ſalary for any duty whatever, will be more attentive to that duty, when the perſon who pays the ſalary, and who is intereſted in the proper diſcharge of the duty, has the power of appointing and diſmiſſing him? The reaſon is obvious. It then becomes the intereſt of the perſon who performs the duty, as well as of the perſon who is benefited by it, that it be *well done*. And can it make any difference, whether the duty be of an eccleſiaſtical, or of a civil nature, when both are diſcharged by *men*, beings of the ſame paſſions, and ſubject to the ſame influences? Every man will do his duty beſt when he has the eye of a maſter immediately upon him. Pleaſe,

Sir, to make the trial. Let your domeſtic ſervants, or your domeſtic chaplain, be appointed not by yourſelf, but ſome other man, or body of men, and let it be as difficult and as ſlow a proceſs, to obtain a change of them, as it is now for a pariſh to get rid of a miniſter whoſe conduct diſgraces them, which is but too often the caſe. I do not believe that, upon this plan, you would have much expectation of being well ſerved.

You dread a ſcene of *faction* and low *intrigue* among the clergy who ſhould be candidates for places in the church. But what was the fact for more than a thouſand years in the chriſtian church in general, when all the biſhops and clergy were elective, when *men* were the ſame that they are now, and, when whatever you imagine of peculiar zeal, and diſintereſtedneſs, in the primitive times of the church, was certainly abated? Or what is now the caſe with the Diſſenters in this country, and through all the ſtates of North America, where the officiating clergy of all denominations are now, and ever have been elective? In ancient times, where the emoluments were great, as in the churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Conſtantinople, and Rome, the election of biſhops was ſometimes attended with factions, and dangerous ones; but even there caſes of this kind were rare, and in the ordinary ſees they ſeldom or never happened. There are more than a thou-

a thouſand diſſenting miniſters in this kingdom, and they are all elected by their reſpective congregations; but any great inconvenience attending an election of this kind very ſeldom occurs. It is probable that you, though living in the country, and acquainted with Diſſenters, never heard of any ſuch thing, any more than in America or in Ireland.

So far is there from being any cabal or intrigue, to obtain places with us, that the perſon choſen ſeldom hears of it, till his invitation is ſent to him; and any thing like canvaſſing would be an effectual bar to his election. Indeed, it very ſeldom happens that there is more than one candidate named at one time, and the members of any congregation are conſidered as very imprudent if they admit of two.

You ſay, that no perſon liberally educated, or any other than thoſe in the loweſt claſſes of life, will be candidates for church preferment. This, Sir, goes upon the idea that no perſon will officiate in a chriſtian church but for the ſake of the temporal emolument which he receives from it, which is a moſt unjuſt and ill-founded reflection on chriſtianity, and the miniſters of it. It may, indeed, be the caſe with a church, the articles of which men of ſenſe cannot ſubſcribe, and the ſtated duty of which is againſt their conſciences. For ſuch ſervices as *theſe* men muſt be *paid*, and very well paid too; and in general it will be done for nothing but the pay.

But this is not the caſe with *us*, nor was it ſo in the early ages of the church. Though few of our ſalaries will more than half maintain us, there are never wanting perſons of independent fortune, and the moſt liberal educations, who voluntarily devote themſelves to the work of our miniſtry. From unbiaſſed choice they give their time, and their fortunes, to an employment which they deem to be moſt honourable and important, in whatever light it may appear to *you*; and our ſituation is ſuch, that few beſides perſons of ſome ability and piety will think of the profeſſion.

So reſpected is the character of a miniſter with us, though the caſe may be different with you, that whatever was his original rank in life, it places him on a level with the moſt opulent of his congregation; and it rarely happens but that in all our congregations, there are ſome perſons of as good fortunes, and as poliſhed manners as any others in the town or neighbourhood. On this account, as well as from a principle of genuine piety and benevolence, the ſituation of a diſſenting miniſter has many attractions, eſpecially to a perſon of a ſerious and ſtudious turn of mind. We think it greatly preferable to that of the generality of the eſtabliſhed clergy, with all their proſpects of preferment, which often produce a cringing and ſervile diſpoſition. And I will venture to ſay, that, independent of the

private

private fortunes which many of our miniſters have, their character and conduct render them as truly reſpectable, and independent in mind, as any ſet of clergy in the world; far more ſo, I am confident, than yours, with all the advantages you boaſt.

In conſequence of the biſhops in France becoming elective, you imagine that nothing of *ſcience*, or *erudition*, will henceforth exiſt in the Gallican church. But did nothing of this kind exiſt in the chriſtian church before the biſhops ceaſed to be elective, which was a change made of late years in compariſon? Hiſtory ſhews the very reverſe to have been the caſe. The dignified clergy, whom the court makes independent of the people, are not thoſe who, in any country, produce learned theological works, but generally men in the lower orders, and who have no motive to chuſe their profeſſion beſides an attachment to the duties and ſtudies peculiar to it, and who wiſh to diſtinguiſh themſelves in it. Very few of the biſhops of your church have been writers, at leaſt after they were made biſhops. The greateſt works your church has to boaſt of were the productions of obſcure clergymen; and, deſpicable as our ſituation may appear to you, who certainly know very little about us, an application to the ſtudies ſuited to our profeſſion, appears, by the number of our writings, to be much greater than among the clergy of the eſtabliſhed church. The

relation we ſtand in to our congregations inſures a reſpectable private character, and in a manner obliges us to devote the leiſure we have to literature, to ſcience, and to profeſſional ſtudies. How ſtrangely, Sir, muſt you be blinded by your high church prejudices not to perceive that this both *is*, and neceſſarily *muſt be* the difference between the clergy of the eſtabliſhed church, and miniſters with us; a difference greatly to our advantage; and it ariſes wholly from our people having the choice of their miniſters, and of courſe a power of diſmiſſing them when, on any account, they do not approve of them.

You inſinuate that the ſcheme to render the clergy of France elective, is preparatory to an intended abolition of chriſtianity, as if chriſtianity did not exiſt, and exiſt in infinitely greater purity, before any of the clergy were otherwiſe than elective. On the contrary, it is the ſyſtem of church eſtabliſhments that always has produced, and that ever muſt produce, unbelievers. You make it a mere engine of ſtate, a ſource of *wealth* to ſome of the clergy, and of *power* to thoſe who have the nomination of them; and in both caſes the proper intereſts of *religion* are never thought of. In conſequence of this, it is notorious that the ſuperior clergy in France and Italy have long been generally conſidered as unbelievers, as well as thoſe who procure

them their preferment. That the church of England is not exempt from the ſame cenſure, I have actually known myſelf; and it is highly probable that, from ſimilar cauſes, it ſtill exiſts in a degree which I have now no opportunity of knowing. Yet, though you clearly ſee that a ſplendid church eſtabliſhment, with biſhops appointed by the court, actually makes many of the clergy mere *men of the world*, ſo that they have nothing of the *chriſtian miniſter*, beſides the name, and the conſequence of this has been the diſbelief, and utter contempt, of chriſtianity in men of rank and fortune, you would pretend that the aboliſhing of chriſtianity would be the conſequence of their diſſolution. Indeed, Sir, both the nature of the caſe, and facts, which are obvious to the moſt careleſs eye, ſhew that chriſtianity cannot be preſerved along with them. They are a diſeaſe that muſt be extirpated, or the ſubject will be deſtroyed.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

Of Monaſtic Inſtitutions, and Mr. Burke's general Maxim that exiſting Powers are not to be deſtroyed.

DEAR SIR,

YOU enlarge much, p. 234, &c. on the ill policy of the National Aſſembly of France, in diſſolving the *monaſtic inſtitutions* of that country, acknowledging, at the ſame time, that "they ſavour "of ſuperſtition. This," you ſay, "ought not, "however, to hinder them from deriving from ſu- "perſtition itſelf any reſources which from thence "may be furniſhed for the public advantage." You do not ſay what uſes, religious or political, you would have made of the funds of theſe ſocieties; but as you acknowledge that "the body of all true "religion conſiſts in obedience to the will of the "Sovereign of the univerſe, in a confidence in his "declarations, and in an imitation of his perfec- "tions," it is ſufficient, I ſhould think, for a ſtate to provide for *this*. If the ſtate give the *body*, let the individuals themſelves provide the *cloathing*, and to what

what better uſe can public lands and funds be applied, than to liquidate the debts of a ſtate?

Monaſtic inſtitutions have, no doubt, had their uſes, and very great uſes, when there was no other retreat for letters, or from the buſtle of a barbarous age. But as literature and piety do not now want that aſylum, and every purpoſe of uſeful religion may be gained as well, and even better, without it, what reaſon can there be for its continuance? Why preſerve an old and inconvenient road, when a better is actually gained? Rather convert it into good arable or paſture land.

It is, beſides, impoſſible to encourage ſuperſtition, but at the expence of true religion, as the experience of every age demonſtrates. The duties of ſuperſtition are better defined than thoſe of religion. Men know preciſely when they have recited a certain number of prayers, or when they have received a certain number of laſhes; but the great duties of benevolence (which, indeed, can only be diſcharged in ſociety) are indefinite, and withal require an attention to the *inward temper of mind*, which is far more difficult than any of the injunctions of ſuperſtition. Will it not be natural, then, for men to attach themſelves to the one, and neglect the other, eſpecially when they are taught

taught that the ſame end may be gained by either?

The very *principle* upon which monachiſm is founded, is falſe and deluſive. It is that men, capable of performing the duties of life, may become fit for heaven by ſolitary meditation and prayer, without mixing with the world at all. While monaſteries are kept up, this idea is encouraged. I cannot help thinking, therefore, that the National Aſſembly acted very wiſely, when, in order to relieve themſelves from the difficulties which the folly and extravagance of a former government had brought upon the country, they adopted the meaſure of aboliſhing their monaſteries, making, however, a ſufficient proviſion for the inhabitants of them.

You will not pretend to ſay that monaſtic inſtitutions are any neceſſary part of the chriſtian ſyſtem, ſince no mention is made of any ſuch thing in the New Teſtament; ſince ſuch eſtabliſhments as you lament the fall of, are, in fact, but recent things; and ſince chriſtianity has not been found to ſuffer any thing by the demolition of them, in this, or any other proteſtant country.

But "in monaſtic inſtitutions," you ſay, p. 232, "in my opinion, was found a great power for the "mechaniſm of politic benevolence. There were

"reve-

"revenues with a public direction; there were "men wholly ſet apart and educated to public pur- "poſes, without any other than public ties, and "public principles; men without a poſſibility of "converting the eſtate of the community into a "private fortune; men denied to ſelf-intereſt, whoſe "avarice is for the community; men to whom "perſonal poverty is honour, and implicit obe- "dience ſtands in the place of freedom. In vain "ſhall a man look to the poſſibility of making ſuch "things when he wants them. The winds blow "as they liſt. Theſe inſtitutions are the products "of enthuſiaſm; they are the inſtruments of wiſ- "dom. Wiſdom cannot create materials, they are "the gifts of nature, or chance; her pride is in the "uſe. To deſtroy any power," you ſay, p. 233, "growing wild from the rank productive force of "the human mind, is almoſt tantamount in the "moral world, to the deſtruction of the apparently "active properties of bodies in the material. Had "you no way of uſing the men, but by converting "monks into penſioners?"

Upon this principle, of no *power* being to be *deſtroyed*, but only to be *regulated*, the greateſt abuſes may be perpetuated; becauſe, in many caſes, there is no preventing the abuſe, without deſtroying the power itſelf. Such, for example, is the claim of

the

the Popes to univerſal dominion over the chriſtian church, and even over temporal princes; in fact, the aſſumption of *all power in heaven and in earth.* Such, alſo, is the power of a prieſt to give abſolution of ſins. To you it ſignifies nothing to allege, that theſe were altogether, and from the beginning, *innovations* and *abuſes* in the chriſtian ſyſtem. You anſwer that they were *great powers*, *which cannot be created at pleaſure*, and therefore that a wiſe ſtateſman would be an advocate for their preſervation, and not for their deſtruction.

To adopt your mode of reaſoning, ſuch deep rooted opinions, as formerly prevailed in all the chriſtian world, of an immenſe power lodged for the wiſeſt purpoſes in one viſible head of the church, the ſublime idea of one *ſpiritual father of all chriſtian princes*, who had no other bond of union, and who ſtood in great need of one, and the confidence that all chriſtians once had in the abſolving power of their prieſts, authoriſed to give advice and direction in all caſes in which *conſcience* was concerned; ſuch opinions as theſe, you will ſay, cannot be produced at pleaſure, they were the ſlow growth of ages, and a foundation of *great powers*, which, if once deſtroyed, will never riſe again. It was, therefore, nothing elſe than madneſs, you would ſay, in the firſt reformers, to aim at the ſubverſion

of

of theſe powers, by refuting the opinions on which they were founded. They ſhould have contented themſelves with preſerving the powers, ſacred and inviolable, and have contrived how to make a right uſe of them.

For the ſame reaſon, had you, in any country, as in Morocco, found the ideas of abſolute power in the prince, of the ſacredneſs of his perſon, and of the happineſs of dying by his hand, you would have been careful not to deſtroy that *power*, which you might not be able to re-produce; but, being happily in poſſeſſion of it, would have made it ſubſervient to the good of the country.

I am glad, however, to find that, though all powers are to be *continued*, you allow of ſome improvement in the *application* of them, which implies ſome change for the better. This is alſo implied in what you ſay by way of apology for the old church eſtabliſhment of France, p. 206, viz. that "it was an old one, and not frequently reviſed," as if ſome *reviſal*, at leaſt, would have been proper. And if a reviſal of *this* eſtabliſhment would have been proper, why not that of *ours* alſo? Has the church of England acquired any preſcriptive right, to ſtand in no need of any farther reviſion; or are you, Sir, authoriſed to ſay to reformation, *Hitherto ſhalt thou go, and no farther?* If not, why your

ſneers,

ſneers, p. 14, at a certain *lay divine*, who only propoſed a reviſal of the Engliſh liturgy and articles, which, in the opinion of many ſerious and thinking perſons, though not in yours, very much want reviſion? Why, alſo, did you oppoſe the petition of a number of conſcientious clergymen, to be releaſed from their preſent obligation to ſubſcribe the thirty-nine articles, many of which you muſt yourſelf, ſurely, think are not abſolutely eſſential to chriſtianity? Why, then, might not clergymen, as well as others, have been at liberty to ſpeculate freely, and think as they ſaw reaſon to do, with reſpect to them?

On the ſame principles on which you oppoſed a reviſion of the church eſtabliſhment of *this* country, you would, no doubt, have oppoſed a reviſion of that of France, of Turkey, or of Indoſtan. However, the ſpirit of reformation, which is now gone forth, is *another great power*, as well as the *exiſting ſyſtems* to be reformed by it; and it is a power which grows ſtronger as they grow weaker; ſo that there can be no doubt which of them will finally prevail, notwithſtanding the aid that your potent arm may give them.

You boldly avow your attachment to old eſtabliſhments, becauſe they are old. "In this enlightened age," you ſay, p. 129, "I am bold enough

"enough to confeſs, that we are generally men of "untaught feelings, that, inſtead of caſting away "all our old prejudices, we cheriſh them to a very "conſiderable degree, and to take more ſhame to "ourſelves, we cheriſh them becauſe they are pre-"judices; and the longer they have laſted, and "the more generally they have prevailed, the more "we cheriſh them."

On this principle, Sir, had you been a Pagan at the time of the promulgation of chriſtianity, you would have continued one. You would alſo have oppoſed the reformation. You would, no doubt, have cheriſhed the long and deep rooted prejudice of the earth being the center of our ſyſtem, and every notion that was *old*; the creed of your nurſe, and of your grandmother, in oppoſition to every thing *new*.

Cheriſh them, then, Sir, as much as you pleaſe. Prejudice and error is only a *miſt*, which the ſun, which has now riſen, will effectually diſperſe. Keep them about you as tight as the countryman in the fable did his cloak; the ſame ſun, without any more violence than the warmth of his beams, will compel you to throw it aſide, unleſs you chuſe to ſweat under it, and bear the ridicule of all your cooler and leſs encumbered companions. The ſpirit of free and rational enquiry is now abroad,

and without any aid from the powers of this world, will not fail to overturn all error and falſe religion, wherever it is found, and neither the church of Rome, nor the church of England, will be able to ſtand before it.

Inſtead of your chimerical idea of *deſtroying no exiſting powers*, but of converting them to ſome *uſe*, which may anſwer no better than an attempt to tame a lion, or a tiger, adopt a plainer maxim, infinitely better adapted to the weak faculties of man, viz. to *follow truth wherever it leads you*, confident that the intereſts of truth will ever be inſeparable from thoſe of virtue and happineſs, and equally ſo to ſtates, as to individuals.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XII.

Of the Sacredneſs of the Revenues of the Church.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR opinion of the *ſacredneſs*, and *majeſty*, of an eſtabliſhed church, is moſt conſpicuous in what you ſay of its *revenues*. On this ſubject you appear to have adopted maxims which, I believe, were never before avowed by any Proteſtant, viz. that the ſtate has no power or authority over any thing that has once been the property of the church.

" From the united conſideration of religion and " conſtitutional policy," you ſay, p. 150, " from " their opinion of a duty to make a ſure proviſion " for the conſolation of the feeble, and the inſtruc- " tion of the ignorant, they have incorporated and " identified the eſtate of the church with the " maſs of private property, of which the ſtate " is not the *proprietor*, either for *uſe* or *domi-* " *nion*, but the *guardian* only, and the *regu-* " *lator*. They have ordained that the proviſion of " this eſtabliſhment might be as ſtable as the earth

" on which it ſtands, and ſhould not fluctuate with " the Euripus of funds and actions."

If the ſtate be not the *proprietor* of the church lands, they muſt be the abſolute *unalienable property* of the *church*, that is of *churchmen* only, and without their conſent no alienation of them is lawful. Conſequently, if all the members of the Houſe of Commons, the king, and all the temporal lords, ſhould vote the alienation of any part of them, it would be mere *robbery* without the conſent of the biſhops, or perhaps that of the whole convocation aſſembled for the purpoſe; perhaps not even then, the preſent clergy being only *truſtees*, or having a *life eſtate* in a revenue which belongs to their ſucceſſors. But, ſurely, if I have any knowledge of the Britiſh conſtitution, this doctrine is abſolutely new to it, and certainly not deduced from the actual conduct of parliament, which has diſpoſed of a very great proportion of what was once the property of the church. I even queſtion whether the principle you here avow, would at this day be acknowledged at St. Omers. The Catholics of France had evidently no idea of the kind, and indeed it is for this that you reproach them.

The Dutch, and other proteſtant ſtates, have confiſcated all the old church property, and pay their clergy from the ſame public treaſury, out of which the officers of the army and navy are paid; and they,

they, no doubt, think themſelves juſtified in ſo doing. A great proportion of the tithes in this country, and, as I am informed, the whole of them in Scotland, is now in the hands of lay proprietors, who, in your opinion, muſt all be guilty of *ſacrilege*, though their conduct be ſanctioned by the law of the land.

If the right of the church to its revenues is not to be affected by any act of a civil legiſlature, and if it be not derived from any *ordinance of man*, it muſt come to them from the *ordinance of God*. But where, Sir, do you find any record of this? There is no mention made of tithes, or of any other permanent church property, in the New Teſtament; and if it has been by the ordinance of God in any period ſubſequent to the writing of thoſe books, it is incumbent upon you, Sir, and other advocates for the unalienable property of the church, to ſhew when the grant was made, and by what miracle (for nothing elſe can anſwer the purpoſe) it was confirmed. But every thing relative to the revenues of the church, is eaſily traced in hiſtory. We very well know *when*, and *whence*, every branch of it aroſe. It was altogether the ordinance of *men*, and generally of weak, ſuperſtitious, and prieſt-ridden men. And ſurely the miſchiefs which have been found to ariſe from the folly of one age, ought

to be removed by the wiſdom of a ſubſequent one. In one paſſage, indeed, you allow all that I contend for, when you ſay, p. 154, "When once the com-"mon-wealth has eſtabliſhed the eſtates of the "church as property;" for this implies that the eſtates of the church are the gift of the common-wealth, or ſtate; and what the ſtate has *given*, it may ſurely *take away*. This is one, among many inconſiſtencies, in your work.

Such, I flatter myſelf, is the light of the preſent day, that confident as you are of your maxim, and of the members of our legiſlature acting upon it, you will ſome time or other find yourſelf miſ-taken. "The Commons of Great Britain," you ſay, p. 156, "in a national emergency, will never "ſeek their reſource from the confiſcation of the "eſtates of the church and poor. Sacrilege and "proſcription are not among the ways and means "of our committee of ſupply. The Jews, in "Change-alley, have not yet dared to hint their "hopes of a mortgage on the revenues belonging "to the ſee of Canterbury. I am not afraid that I "ſhall be diſavowed, when I aſſure you, that there "is not *one* public man in this kingdom whom "you would wiſh to quote, no not one of any party "or deſcription, who does not reprobate the diſ-"honeſt, perfidious, and cruel confiſcation which

"the

" the National Aſſembly has been compelled to " make, of that property which it was their firſt " duty to protect."

I am ſurprized, Sir, that you ſhould not be ſenſible that this declaration is by no means true in fact. It is in my own power to quote many perſons in public life, who greatly approve that conduct of the National Aſſembly of France which you ſo ſtrongly condemn. You forget that *Salus Reipublicæ eſt ſuprema lex*; and if ever the circumſtances of this country ſhould be ſuch, as that either the intereſt of the *church* or that of the *ſtate* muſt be abandoned, I have no doubt but that, with general approbation, he former would be readily ſacrificed to the latter.

You have made the proviſion for the *poor* as ſacred as that for the *church*. But certainly this was the inſtitution of *man*, or rather of *woman*; for it took its riſe in the time of queen Elizabeth in this country, and is not known in any other. To many perſons, as well as to myſelf, our method of providing for the poor, is no proof of the wiſdom of our anceſtors. It takes from man the neceſſity of *foreſight*, and inſtead of being the moſt provident, makes him the moſt improvident of all creatures. So far are our poor laws from encouraging induſtry, that they encourage idleneſs, and of courſe profligacy. Such is the ſtate of this country, burthened with taxes to ſupport the church, and the poor, and

to pay the intereſt (the principle is out of the queſtion) of debts contracted by the folly of our anceſtors, that its ability to ſupport itſelf under them, is very problematical*.

"It is," you ſay, p. 149, "from our attach-
"ment to a church eſtabliſhment, that the Engliſh
"nation did not think it wiſe to intruſt that great
"fundamental intereſt of the whole, to what they
"truſt no part of their civil or military public
"ſervice, that is, to the unſteady and precarious
"contribution of individuals. They go farther.
"They certainly never have ſuffered, and never
"will ſuffer, the fixed eſtate of the church to be
"converted into a penſion, to depend on the Trea-
"ſury, &c. The people of England think that
"they have conſtitutional motives, as well as re-
"ligious, againſt any project of turning their inde-
"pendent clergy into eccleſiaſtical penſioners of
"ſtate. They tremble for their liberty, from the
"influence of a clergy dependent on the crown;
"they tremble for the public tranquility, from the
"diſorders of a factious clergy, if it were made to
"depend upon any other than the crown. They

* Would it not be reaſonable to fix ſome time, beyond which it ſhould not be deemed right to bind poſterity? If our anceſtors make a fooliſh *law*, we ſcruple not to repeal it; but if they make fooliſh *wars*, and incur fooliſh *debts*, we have, at preſent, no remedy whatever.

"therefore

"therefore made their church, like their king, and "their nobility, independent."

There are ſeveral poſitions in this paragraph, that appear to me rather extraordinary. The *clergy*, to be as independent as *the crown*, or *the nobility*, ſhould have a negative in all proceedings in parliament. But the clergy are, in fact, dependent upon the crown, and muſt neceſſarily be ſo, while the crown has the diſpoſal of all biſhoprics, and other great preferments; and the effect of this is ſeen by their voting with the crown. It is alſo no compliment to the general diſpoſition of the clergy, that you ſhould tremble for the effects of their *factions*, if they were to depend upon any other than the crown. I ſhould think, however, that, if they be ſo dangerous a body of men, you might make yourſelf rather eaſier if they were made to depend on the *whole legiſlature*, and not upon the crown only, to which they now give a dangerous acceſſion of power.

But, Sir, only take away the emoluments of the clergy, and leave them to ſubſiſt, as we diſſenting miniſters do, and as the apoſtles and biſhops in primitive times did, on the voluntary contributions of thoſe who are benefited by their miniſtry, and you will effectually remove all cauſe of trembling on their account. Let them be naturally as quarrelſome

quarrelſome as dogs, they will be as quiet as lambs, if no bone of contention be thrown among them. What danger ariſes from *our* diviſions, or thoſe of the many diſcordant ſects which have ever exiſted in North America? Be they ever ſo great, we never trouble the ſtate with them, and we are unanimous and hearty in every common cauſe, reſpecting either chriſtianity or public liberty.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

Of the Danger of the Church, and of the Teſt Laws.

DEAR SIR,

THE cry of the *church being in danger*, is almoſt as old as the church itſelf, and has been kept up by its friends, and phyſicians, whenever it has ſuited their purpoſe, from the earlieſt times to the preſent day. This has ſerved as an excuſe for every outrage upon others; as if nothing was ever meant by them, but to ſecure itſelf. And thus the moſt bloody and *offenſive* wars are often made under the cover of being merely *defenſive* ones, which are always held to be lawful. The *church of Chriſt* is built upon a rock, and we are aſſured that *the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it*. Now, had this church of yours, whoſe fears and cries have always been the ſignal of alarm to all its neighbours, been made of proper materials, and conſtructed in a proper manner, had it been built upon this rock of *truth*, it would never have had any thing to fear. Its own evidence and excellence would have ſupported it.

Should

Should the *ſtate* itſelf be overturned, the people would, of themſelves, and from predilection, reinſtate their favourite *church* in all its former rights and privileges. But you are ſenſible it has not this hold on the minds of the people, and you juſtly ſuſpect that, if any misfortune ſhould happen to it, they would never rebuild it, but, if left to their own free choice, would adopt ſome other plan, more uſeful and commodious.

Time was when your church pretended to *fear where no fear was*, and being then vigorous, her cries were heard as the roaring of a lion. Of late ſhe has been ſo feeble, that we only amuſe ourſelves with them; and now the danger is really tranſferred from us to herſelf.

As you, Sir, are ſo *tremblingly alive all over*, for the fate of this dear church of yours, I will tell you two real cauſes of apprehenſion with reſpect to it, the one from without, and the other from within.

I. Be afraid of war, or any thing that ſhall add to the public burdens. For whenever the time ſhall come that the intereſt of the national debt cannot be paid (and that time certainly approaches) ſacred as the property of the church might be in your pious hands, in whoſe mind, as you ſay, p. 147, "a continued and general approbation of "the church eſtabliſhment is ſo worked, that you "are

" are not able to diſtinguiſh what you have learned " from others from the reſult of your own medita- " tions;" other perſons, having had a different education, may be able to make this diſtinction, and without any dread of divine judgments, may, while you ſtand aghaſt with horror, and expiring with diſmay, apply the hallowed treaſure to ſome unhallowed uſe. Had our preſent miniſter actually entered into the war that ſome ſuppoſe he did not do wiſely to provoke, and the conſequence had been, as it probably would, the addition of another hundred millions to our debt, though *you* might not tremble for what you conſider as the *ark of God* in this country, other perſons, whoſe faith was not ſo ſtrong, certainly would.

You, Sir, appear not to be inſenſible of the new and critical ſituation into which immenſe public debts have brought moſt European nations, our own not excepted. The apparent ſtability of theſe governments has encouraged them to venture upon a ſyſtem, which, by calling forth the powers of future generations in aid of the preſent, has enabled them to make extraordinary exertions on particular occaſions. Had there been wiſdom in theſe exertions, poſterity, being benefited by them, would have reaſon to thank their anceſtors. But exertions of this kind exceeding the natural powers of the ſtate, have reſembled thoſe convulſive motions of the muſcles which exhauſt their force,

and

and debilitate them with reſpect to future exertions. And if this ſyſtem be purſued, as in all probability it will, the time muſt come when even theſe extraordinary reſources will fail, and we ſhall then find ourſelves in the very ſame difficulties in which the French are involved at preſent.

In this caſe (which it behoves us to be looking forward to, that we may collect all our wiſdom, in order to leſſen the danger with which it threatens us) do you imagine, Sir, that we ſhall be able to preſerve our preſent government in all its forms, civil and eccleſiaſtical, any more than the French have been able to preſerve theirs? Do not flatter yourſelf ſo much. That great criſis will be the touchſtone to our government, as well as to that of France. Whatever ſhall be then thought to be *unſound* in the conſtitution, and to have contributed, directly or indirectly, to bring us into our difficulties, will be marked for exciſion; and if we muſt, as it were, *begin again*, as the French have found themſelves under a neceſſity of doing, we ſhall, no doubt, endeavour to begin upon a better plan, and retain as few as poſſible of the imperfections of which we now complain, and ſhall then complain of more.

Is it not our immenſe public debt, that has in various ways contributed to the encreaſed *power of the crown* (of which you, Sir, among others, not long ago complained) and is it poſſible, then, that *this* ſhould continue the ſame, when this debt, which

now ſupports it, can no longer be ſupported? Is not our preſent ſhamefully *unequal repreſentation* another circumſtance connected with the power of the crown, giving it a decided majority in the Houſe of Commons? Can *this*, therefore, be continued, when the power of the crown is diminiſhed; and will not theſe great changes in the civil conſtitution be followed by many others?

In this neceſſary reformation of the *civil* government, will it be poſſible, think you, to prevent all enquiry into *eccleſiaſtical* matters, which are now ſo cloſely connected with things of a civil nature? In this caſe, is it a certainty that *any* church eſtabliſhment will be continued; or if there be, will it be preciſely that which now ſubſiſts? Will the biſhops retain their ſeats in Parliament? Will the ſpiritual courts be continued? Will the clergy be maintained by tithes? Will the doctrines of the church undergo no change? Will the ſubſcription to all the thirty-nine articles be ſtill enforced? Will the univerſities remain ſhut to the Diſſenters, who cannot ſubſcribe to them? Will the teſt laws remain in force, to exclude us from all civil offices, &c. &c. &c.? If this be your opinion, *great*, indeed, Sir, is *your faith*, greater, I imagine, than that of many an archbiſhop. Though, however, it ſhould be equal to the *removing* of all theſe *mountains*, you will, I doubt not, imagine this favourite church of yours to be rather ſafer in times of *peace*, and without any farther

farther encreaſe of our national debt, than with a *war* that might double it.

II. This danger from *without* is uncertain, and may be warded off; but not ſo that from *within*. I mean the growing light of the age, in conſequence of which we are more and more ſenſible of the abſurdity of the doctrines, the inſufficiency of the diſcipline, and the oppreſſion of the revenues, of your church. The people of this country will at length diſcover that what they have paid ſo dearly for, as a *benefit*, is really a *nuiſance*, that it is hoſtile to the cleareſt truth, and ſubverſive of rational liberty, that very liberty for which you, Sir, profeſs to be a warm advocate.

Diſſenters of one denomination or another, are very much increaſed of late years, and many of them are avowedly hoſtile to every eſtabliſhment. The methodiſts are by no means attached to it. Few of them ever trouble your churches, and frequently in great bodies become diſſenters; and the far greater part of the nominal churchmen only hold to the church from form and cuſtom; the more ſerious and intelligent of them earneſtly wiſhing for a change, but deſirous of promoting it without noiſe or riſk. Few perſons of rank attend your worſhip, or any worſhip, and are only attached to the church for ſecular purpoſes. But this and every thing elſe, ſhort of a real approbation and predi-

lection,

lection, are uncertain and poor props for ſo old and decayed a building as yours is.

The increaſe of diſſenters is a fact that you and your clergy are either wholly ignorant of, or are ſtrangely inattentive to. I ſhall mention only one inſtance. I have reſided in Birmingham only ten years, and there are now building the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth, new places of diſſenting, or methodiſt worſhip, beſides another building converted into a place of worſhip, in this town, all within this ſhort period, nine of them for new congregations, and the others for increaſed ones. Another is talked of, and many have been built in the neighbourhood; and in this time there has not been one additional church, or chapel, for the members of the church of England. The increaſe of the diſſenters and methodiſts in Sheffield, in Leeds, and, I have no doubt, in other manufacturing towns, has been nearly in the ſame proportion.

Every controverſy in which churchmen have meddled, has been to their diſadvantage. The heads of the church therefore now wiſely diſcourage all controverſy. But even this policy will not avail them long. Every clergyman is not wiſe, and *fools*, as they ſay, *will be meddling*; and every meddling is to their hurt, and that of their cauſe.

Let thinking people, then, judge what muſt be the fate of a church, whoſe fundamental doctrines are diſbelieved by men of ſenſe and inquiry, whoſe articles are well known not to be ſubſcribed *bonâ fide* by thoſe who officiate in it, while the truly enlightened and ſerious either keep out of the church, or relinquiſh their preferment in it. And this is very much the caſe with the church of England at preſent.

The alliance of any ſtate with ſo weak and tottering a church as yours, muſt either be diſſolved, or both muſt fall together. And, aſtoniſhed as you are at "the ſteady eye with which" you ſay, p. 85, "we are prepared to view the greateſt calamity "that can befal this country," the diſſolution of this fatal alliance is ſtill the object of our moſt ardent wiſhes. By the calmeſt repreſentations, and the moſt earneſt remonſtrances, we are endeavouring to bring about a peaceable ſeparation, attended with no calamity. We have therefore nothing to blame ourſelves for, if that calamity, which we foreſee, and deplore, but which the obſtinacy of others may put it out of our power to prevent, ſhould come. Happy is ſuch a country as America, where no ſuch *alliance* as that of *church* and *ſtate* was ever formed, where no ſuch unnatural mixture of eccleſiaſtical and civil polity was ever made. They ſee

our

our errors, and wiſely avoid them. We alſo may ſee them, but when it will be too late.

You, Sir, who with many others have lately joined in the cry of the church being in danger, have thought to guard it by *laws and teſts*, excluding Diſſenters from all places of truſt and profit. Paying our full ſhare to the public taxes, and having always diſtinguiſhed ourſelves by our induſtry, in manufactures and commerce (all our trading towns abounding with Diſſenters) we thought it not unreaſonable to requeſt a right of admiſſion, at the will of the crown, or the election of our fellow ſubjects, to ſuch advantages as ariſe from that flouriſhing ſtate of the country to which, it is not denied that we have eminently contributed. Thrice we have made the application, and twice you, Sir, made no oppoſition to us. We therefore flattered ourſelves that, having been in other reſpects a friend to *equal liberty*, eſpecially in America and Ireland, where, as well as in Scotland, no ſuch teſts are known, you would have been a friend to *us*. But it ſeems that, after deeply ruminating on the ſubject, and having, no doubt, prayed for, and, as you thought, obtained, more light than you had before, you moſt unexpectedly, and with peculiar warmth and fierceneſs, oppoſed us *.

* Let Mr. Burke's conduct with reſpect to the Teſt Act, be compared with the following paſſage in his preſent pamphlet.

As you have given ſome attention to the caſe of the Diſſenters, and, in your ſpeech in our favour, complained of the hardſhip of our being obliged to ſubſcribe to the articles of a church from which we derive no emolument, I wonder that you do not likewiſe ſee the unreaſonableneſs of our being ſubjected to any other hardſhip on the ſame principle. As we derive no *advantage* from the eſtabliſhed church, we ought not to ſuffer any unneceſſary *diſadvantage* from our nonconformity to it. But we certainly do ſo, if we be excluded from all civil offices and emoluments on that account. Muſt the members of this favourite church of yours engroſs all the good things of *this life*, as well as thoſe of *another*, and muſt we unfortunate Diſſenters partake of neither?

That there is danger threatening your church, I clearly ſee. But the method you have adopted has

" You do not imagine that I wiſh to confine power, authority, and " diſtinction, to blood, and names, and titles. No, Sir, there is " no qualification for government but true virtue and wiſdom. " Wherever they are actually found, they have, in whatever ſtate, " condition, profeſſion, or trade, the paſſport of heaven to human " place, and honour. Woe to the country which would madly " and impiouſly reject the ſervice of the talents and virtues, civil, " military, or religious, that are given to grace, or to ſerve it, and " would condemn to obſcurity every thing formed to diffuſe luſtre " and glory around a ſtate." p. 74.

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no tendency to leſſen, but only to increaſe, that danger. The old adage, which you had forgotten, is *divide et impera*; but by holding us all out as equally objects of excluſion from places of truſt and power, you give us a common intereſt, and a *bond of union*, which we hardly thought of before. Far from being diſcouraged by our repulſes, we ſhall not fail to renew our application with more confidence than ever, ſeeing nothing but juſtice on our ſide, and jealous bigotry on yours.

Had you admitted us to an equal participation of civil rights, we might have thought leſs of our religious ones. Indeed, perſons who are candidates for *civil offices* are not apt to be zealous in matters of *religion*; or if they were, the Diſſenters in office being greatly out-numbered by the members of the eſtabliſhed church, in the ſame or ſimilar offices, and divided among themſelves, their power of hurting the ſtate would have been nothing. A child in politics might have ſeen this; but you, Sir, did not.

You alſo did not ſee that, what we moſt of all wiſh, and what you have the greateſt reaſon to dread, is not any temporal power, or influence, that we have any chance of acquiring. This we think little about, but *diſcuſſion*, the free diſcuſſion of every thing re-

lating to religion. For, diſtant as they may appear in idea, all religious ſubjects have a relation to each other, the doctrine of the *teſt* and that of the *trinity*, the power of a juſtice of the peace and that of a biſhop or archbiſhop. Touch but any extremity of the web, and the vibration will be felt to the center, and to every other extremity.

Your clergy themſelves force this upon us. For they cannot rail at us as Diſſenters, but they muſt needs glance at our *opinions*, and eſpecially ſuch as they imagine will render us moſt obnoxious, never forgetting the *unitarianiſm* of many of us. Conſequently, when we defend ourſelves (not being apt to entertain doubts of the goodneſs of our cauſe) we purſue our antagoniſts through the whole field of their argument. We boldly aſſert the *unity of God*, and the purity and ſimplicity of his worſhip. We exclaim againſt all uſurpation of the rights of our only law-giver Jeſus Chriſt, by prieſts or kings, by councils or parliaments. On theſe topics we are always ready to *cry aloud and not ſpare*. In this manner, Sir, you raiſe a ſtorm the force of which you and your church will not be able to ſtand.

It is amuſing to obſerve how very differently the ſame things ſtrike different perſons, according to their previous educations and habits of thinking. Dr. Price adviſes thoſe who object to the religion preſcribed

preſcribed by public authority, and who yet cannot altogether approve of any other, that is openly profeſſed in their country, to ſet up a ſeparate worſhip for themſelves. To me nothing appears more reaſonable than this conduct; and yet you, Sir, endeavour, p. 15, to turn it into ridicule; no doubt becauſe to you it really appears in a ridiculous light. But *ridicule is not the teſt of truth*, and if reaſon and common ſenſe is to be heard, it muſt ſurely appear even to yourſelf, if you reflect a moment on the ſubject, that upon any other principle than that of Dr. Price, no reformation can be juſtified. Becauſe, upon the very ſame principle, whatever it be, that any perſon is authoriſed to diſſent from a mode of worſhip ſet up by *the ſtate*, he is authoriſed to diſſent from any that may be ſet up by *private perſons*; and if he think the public profeſſion of religion, in the form of *public worſhip*, to be a duty, he is obliged in conſcience to ſet up one of his own, whether more or fewer perſons, or any beſides his own family, will join him in it. And where, Sir, would be the great inconvenience of maſters of families, of whatever rank, being *prieſts* as well as *kings* in their own houſhold? What is there in the duty of a teacher of chriſtianity that you, Sir, are not qualified to diſcharge? And this age furniſhes abundant helps for thoſe who are not qualified. If any

thing elſe be an obſtruction to this ſcheme, it muſt ariſe from the influence of mere faſhion, or ſuperſtition.

You, Sir, ſeem to dread a *number of ſects* among chriſtians. But what ſerious inconvenience would ariſe from their being increaſed even ten fold? It would be much better for the ſtate, than if there were only two. Religious bigotry would alſo be diminiſhed by this means, and the members of theſe ſects would ſooner learn to exerciſe charity for each other, diſtinguiſhing the great things in which all chriſtians agree, from the comparatively ſmaller things in which any of them differ. In this way, alſo, they would ſooner arrive at a *rational uniformity*; the points of difference being freely canvaſſed, and truth prevailing, and eſtabliſhing itſelf, as, no doubt, it will in the end.

I am now, Sir, about to relieve your attention, and that of our readers, to the ſubject of the *connexion*, or, as it is called, the *alliance*, between the church and the ſtate; but I cannot wholly conclude without expreſſing my earneſt wiſh that it may be thoroughly conſidered in every point of view.

It certainly opens a field of very important diſcuſſion for philoſophers, politicians, and divines; and it is not to be treated in an authoritative dogmatical way. That chriſtian miniſters ſhould be paid by the ſtate, rather than by thoſe who chuſe

to be inſtructed by them; that they ought to have temporal courts, with the power of inflicting civil penalties; that princes ſhould have the nomination of them; that ſome of them ſhould be equal in rank and power to temporal peers; and that articles of faith ſhould have the ſanction of a temporal legiſlature, are by no means *axioms*, or ſelf evident truths, in a ſyſtem of civil policy. There muſt, therefore be more *ſimple principles*, from which, if they be proper expedients in government, their neceſſity, or expedience, may be deduced. Let us then ſee what thoſe principles are, and in what manner the deduction is made.

It cannot be ſaid, that the neceſſity or expedience, of this mixture of civil and eccleſiaſtical power is to be taken for granted; theſe things having never been found aſunder; becauſe, for many centuries, as I have ſhewn, all the particulars mentioned above were unknown in the chriſtian world, and ſome of them are comparatively of very late date. Let us, then, examine their real origin, and conſider the circumſtances in which they aroſe; and let us ſee whether our preſent circumſtances really *require* any ſuch inſtitutions.

It is time, however, to draw the attention of politicians to the ſubject, and to compare all the conſequences which either actually have attended, or

which

which may probably attend, each of the two ſchemes.

Infinite, as every perſon acquainted with hiſtory muſt acknowledge, have been the evils that have reſulted to mankind, and eſpecially to the chriſtian world, from the interference of civil power in matters of religion. Hence all perſecution in every age, and almoſt all the hatred and animoſity that has ariſen among the different ſects and parties of chriſtians, for which there would have been very little food, or exerciſe, if civil magiſtrates had not interfered in the diſputes of theologians. Hence a great additional cauſe of taxation, and generally in the moſt inconvenient form; and hence the introduction of a totally *new power*, which it has been thought neceſſary to combine with the old ones in the ſyſtem of government, and which has generally been placed on a par with all the reſt; the *church* and the *ſtate* having become correlative terms. And, as nothing is found more difficult to balance than *two powers*, the one neceſſarily gaining what the other loſes, the ſtruggle between theſe two was inceſſant, and productive of the worſt effects, for many centuries, in all parts of chriſtendom. At the reformation the power of the church was very much broken, but ſtill too much of it remains in all countries, and more of it in this, than in any Proteſtant

Proteſtant ſtate whatever. For in no other of them have eccleſiaſtics a ſeat in the ſupreme legiſlature of the nation.

Though the power of the church was derived from the feudal ſyſtem, this moſt abſurd of all its parts ſtill remains, when many other parts of it, far leſs exceptionable and inconvenient, have been aboliſhed. But as the church cannot now ſubſiſt of itſelf, as it did formerly, when it overawed the whole of the ſtate, it gives a vaſt additional power to the crown, on which it is now wholly dependent; our princes having aſſumed that *ſupremacy over the church*, which had been uſurped by the popes.

Here, then, is an ample field of argument; and why may not this diſcuſſion be as cool and amicable as any other? You, Sir, have made it a ſubject of popular declamation, rather than of diſpaſſionate reaſoning; but that need not hinder others from taking it up in a different and better manner: and if you will pleaſe to change your ſtyle, and aſſume the character of a *philoſopher*, and not that of a mere *rhetorician*, it will be very agreeable to us to have you of the party. You are now of an age in which I ſhould have imagined, that the powers of the *imagination* would have been more checked by thoſe of *reaſon*; and on this ſubject, the

paſſions,

paſſions, as well as the *imagination*, ſhould be abſolutely ſilent, and the friends and enemies of church eſtabliſhments ſhould ſimply *reaſon together*.

It is time that we no longer *halt between two opinions*, ſo very important and oppoſite to each other, as, whether religion ſhould be left to every man's free choice, like philoſophy, or medicine, or it ſhould be impoſed upon men, whether they chuſe it or not; whether any man, or body of men, have a right to preſcribe articles of faith to others, or whether every man ſhould be left to think and act for himſelf in this reſpect, accountable only to God, and his own conſcience. Let us come to a ſerious *iſſue* in this buſineſs, and if chriſtian ſtates have gone upon wrong and erroneous principles, neither agreeable to truth, nor favourable to the intereſts of ſociety, let them by all means be reformed, and as ſpeedily, and with as little inconvenience, as poſſible. Or, if the conſtitution we complain of be a good one, or *the beſt all things conſidered*, let it appear to be ſo, in fair and open diſcuſſion, and we ſhall acquieſce in it.

In theſe *Letters*, I have by no means exhauſted this ſubject. Much more remains to be ſaid, and much more I have myſelf advanced in other publications, eſpecially in the ſecond edition of my *Eſſay on the principles of civil government*, which includes what

what I have advanced on *church authority*, in reply to Dr. Balguy; and in my *Familiar letters addreſſed to the inhabitants of Birmingham.*

To ſhew that I am not ſingular in my opinion of the impropriety of civil eſtabliſhments of religion, I would more particularly recommend to your notice, and that of my readers, an excellent tract of Mr. Berrington's, intitled, *The Rights of Diſſenters*; nor is he the only Catholic who ſees this buſineſs of the *alliance of church and ſtate* in the ſame light that I do. Different as are our ſyſtems of religion, in a variety of important reſpects, we are equally willing that they ſhould ſtand or fall by their proper evidence, and we aſk no aid of the civil power to ſupport them.

I ſhall cloſe this article with an extract from *Dr. Ramſay's Hiſtory of the American Revolution.* Speaking of the new forms of government which were framed after the emancipation of the Americans from their ſubjection to this country, he ſays, Vol. I. p. 355, "It was one of the peculiarities of theſe forms of "government, that all religious eſtabliſhments were "aboliſhed. Some retained a conſtitutional diſ-"tinction between chriſtians and others, with reſpect "to eligibility to office; but the idea of ſupport-"ing one denomination at the expence of others, "or of raiſing any one ſect of proteſtants to a legal pre-

" pre-eminence, was univerſally reprobated. The " *alliance between church and ſtate* was compleatly " broken, and each was left to ſupport itſelf inde- " pendent of the other. The world," he ſays, Vol. II. p. 317, " will ſoon ſee the reſult of an " experiment in politics, and be able to determine " whether the happineſs of ſociety is encreaſed by " religious eſtabliſhments, or diminiſhed by the " want of them." It is an experiment, I will add, on a ſufficiently large ſcale, and in a very reaſonable time, we may expect to ſee the reſult of the proceſs.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

Of the Proſpect of the general Enlargement of Liberty, civil and religious, opened by the Revolution in France.

DEAR SIR,

I CANNOT conclude theſe *Letters*, without congratulating, not *you*, Sir, or the many admirers of your performance, who have no feeling of *joy* on the occaſion, but the French nation, and the world; I mean the liberal, the rational, and the virtuous part of the world, on the great revolution that has taken place in France, as well as on that which ſome time ago took place in America. Such events as theſe teach the doctrine of *liberty*, *civil* and *religious*, with infinitely greater clearneſs and force, than a thouſand treatiſes on the ſubject. They ſpeak a language intelligible to all the world, and preach a doctrine congenial to every human heart.

Theſe great events, in many reſpects unparalleled in all hiſtory, make a totally new, a moſt wonderful, and important, æra in the hiſtory of mankind. It is, to adopt your own rhetorical ſtyle, a

change from darkneſs to light, from ſuperſtition to ſound knowledge, and from a moſt debaſing ſervitude to a ſtate of the moſt exalted freedom. It is a liberating of all the powers of man from that variety of fetters, by which they have hitherto been held. So that, in compariſon with what has been, now only can we expect to ſee what men really are, and what they can do.

The generality of governments have hitherto been little more than a combination of *the few*, againſt *the many*; and to the mean paſſions and low cunning of theſe few, have the great intereſts of mankind been too long ſacrificed. Whole nations have been deluged with blood, and every ſource of future proſperity has been drained, to gratify the caprices of ſome of the moſt deſpicable, or the moſt execrable, of the human ſpecies. For what elſe have been the generality of kings, their miniſters of ſtate, or their miſtreſſes, to whoſe wills whole kingdoms have been ſubject? What can we ſay of thoſe who have hitherto taken the lead in conducting the affairs of nations, but that they have commonly been either *weak* or *wicked*, and ſometimes both? Hence the common reproach of all hiſtories, that they exhibit little more than a view of the vices and miſeries of mankind. From this time, therefore, we may expect that it will wear a different, and more pleaſing aſpect.

Hitherto,

Hitherto, alſo, infinite have been the miſchiefs in which all nations have been involved, on account of *religion*, with which, as it concerns only God and men's own conſciences, civil government, as ſuch, has nothing to do. Stateſmen, miſled by ignorant or intereſted prieſts, have taken upon them to preſcribe what men ſhould believe and practice, in order to get to heaven, when they themſelves have often neither believed, nor practiſed, any thing under that deſcription. They have ſet up idols, to which all men, under the ſevereſt penalties, have been compelled to bow; and the wealth and power of populous nations, which might have been employed in great and uſeful undertakings, have been diverted from their proper channels, to enforce their unrighteous decrees. By this means have mankind been kept for ages in a ſtate of bondage worſe than Egyptian, the bondage of the mind.

How glorious, then, is the proſpect, the reverſe of all the paſt, which is now opening upon us, and upon the world. Government, we may now expect to ſee, not only in theory, and in books, but in actual practice, calculated for the general good, and taking no more upon it than the general good requires; leaving all men the enjoyment of as many of their *natural rights* as poſſible, and no more interfering with matters of religion, with men's notions concerning God, and a future ſtate, than with philoſophy, or medicine.

After the noble example of America, we may expect, in due time, to see the governing powers of all nations confining their attention to the *civil* concerns of them, and consulting their welfare in the present state only; in consequence of which they may all be flourishing and happy. *Truth* of all kinds, and especially *religious truth*, meeting with no obstruction, and standing in no need of heterogeneous supports, will then establish itself by its own evidence; and whatever is *false* and delusive, all the forms of superstition, every corruption of true religion, and all usurpation over the rights of conscience, which have been supported by power or prejudice, will be universally exploded, as they ought to be.

Together with the general prevalence of the true principles of civil government, we may expect to see the extinction of all *national prejudice* and enmity, and the establishment of *universal peace* and good will among all nations. When the affairs of the various societies of mankind shall be conducted by those who shall truly represent them, who shall feel as they feel, and think as they think; who shall really understand, and consult their interests, they will no more engage in those mutually offensive *wars*, which the experience of many centuries has shown to be constantly expensive and ruinous. They will no longer covet what belongs to others, and which they have found to be of no real service

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to hem, but will content themſelves with making the moſt of their own.

The very idea of *diſtant poſſeſſions* will be even ridiculed. The Eaſt and the Weſt Indies, and every thing *without ourſelves* will be diſregarded, and wholly excluded from all European ſyſtems; and only thoſe diviſions of men, and of territory, will take place, which the common convenience requires, and not ſuch as the mad and inſatiable ambition of princes demands. No part of America, Africa, or Aſia, will be held in ſubjection to any part of Europe, and all the intercourſe that will be kept up among them, will be for their mutual advantage.

The cauſes of *civil wars*, the moſt diſtreſſing of all others, will likewiſe ceaſe, as well as thoſe of foreign ones. They are chiefly contentions for *offices*, on account of the power and emoluments annexed to them. But when the *nature* and *uſes* of all civil offices ſhall be well underſtood, the power and emoluments annexed to them, will not be an object ſufficient to produce a war. Is it at all probable, that there will ever be a civil war in America, about the preſidentſhip of the *United States?* And when the chief magiſtracies in other countries ſhall be reduced to their proper ſtandard, they will be no more worth contending for, than they are in America. If the actual buſineſs of a nation be done

as well for the ſmall emolument of that preſident-ſhip, as the ſimilar buſineſs of other nations, there will be no apparent reaſon why more ſhould be given for doing it.

If there be a ſuperfluity of public money, it will not be employed to augment the profuſion, and increaſe the undue influence, of individuals, but in works of great public utility, which are always wanted, and which nothing but the enormous expences of government, and of wars, chiefly occaſioned by the ambition of kings and courts, have prevented from being carried into execution. The expence of the late American war only would have converted all the waſte grounds of this country into gardens. What canals, bridges, and noble roads, what public buildings, public libraries, and public laboratories, &c. &c. would it not have made for us? If the *pride of nations* muſt be gratified, let it be in ſuch things as theſe, and not in the idle pageantry of a court, calculated only to corrupt and enſlave a nation.

Another cauſe of civil wars has been an attachment to certain perſons and families, as poſſeſſed of ſome *inherent right* to kingly power. Such were the bloody wars between the houſes of York and Lancaſter, in this country. But when, beſides the reduction of the power of crowns within their proper bounds (when it will be no greater than the public good requires) that kind of reſpect for princes which

which is founded on mere ſuperſtition (exactly ſimilar to that which has been attached to prieſts in all countries) ſhall vaniſh, as all ſuperſtition certainly will before real knowledge, wiſe nations will not involve themſelves in war for the ſake of any particular perſons, or families, who have never ſhewn an equal regard for them. They will conſider their own intereſt more, and that of their *magiſtrates*, that is, their *ſervants*, leſs.

Other remaining cauſes of civil war are different opinions about modes of government, and differences of intereſts between provinces. But when mankind ſhall be a little more accuſtomed to reflection, and conſider the miſeries of civil war, they will have recourſe to any other method of deciding their differences, in preference to that of the ſword. It was taken for granted, that the moment America had thrown off the yoke of Great Britain, the different ſtates would go to war among themſelves, on ſome of theſe accounts. But the event has not verified the prediction, nor is it at all probable that it ever will. The people of that country are wiſer than ſuch prophets in this.

If *time* be allowed for the diſcuſſion of differences, ſo great a majority will form one opinion, that the minority will ſee the neceſſity of giving way. Thus will *reaſon* be the umpire in all diſputes, and extinguiſh

tinguiſh civil wars as well as foreign ones. The empire of reaſon will ever be the reign of peace.

This, Sir, will be the happy ſtate of things, diſtinctly and repeatedly foretold in many prophecies, delivered more than two thouſand years ago; when the common parent of mankind will *cauſe wars to ceaſe to the ends of the earth*, when *men ſhall beat their ſwords into plough-ſhares, and their ſpears into pruning hooks; when nation ſhall no more riſe up againſt nation, and when they ſhall learn war no more.* Iſ. ii. 4. Micah iv. 3. This is a ſtate of things which good ſenſe, and the prevailing ſpirit of commerce, aided by chriſtianity, and true philoſophy, cannot fail to effect in time. But it can never take place while mankind are governed in the wretched manner in which they now are. For peace can never be eſtabliſhed, but upon the extinction of the *cauſes of war*, which exiſt in all the preſent forms of government, and in the political maxims which will always be encouraged by them. I mention this topic in a letter to *you*, on the idea that you are a real believer in revelation, though your defence of all church eſtabliſhments, as ſuch, is no argument in favour of this opinion; the moſt zealous abettors of *them*, and the moſt determined enemies of all reformation, having been unbelievers in all religion, which they have made uſe of merely as an engine of ſtate.

In

In this new condition of the world, there may ſtill be *kings*, but they will be no longer *ſovereigns*, or *ſupreme lords*, no human beings to whom will be aſcribed ſuch titles as thoſe of *moſt ſacred*, or *moſt excellent majeſty*. There will be no more ſuch a profanation of epithets, belonging to God only, by the application of them to mortals like ourſelves. There will be *magiſtrates*, appointed and paid for the conſervation of order, but they will only be conſidered as the firſt *ſervants of the people*, and accountable to them. Standing armies, thoſe inſtruments of tyranny, will be unknown, though the people may be trained to the uſe of arms, for the purpoſe of repelling the invaſion of *Barbarians*. For no other deſcription of men will have recourſe to war, or think of diſturbing the repoſe of others; and till they become civilized, as in the natural progreſs of things they neceſſarily muſt, they will be ſufficiently overawed by the ſuperior power of nations that are ſo.

There will ſtill be *religion*, and of courſe *miniſters* of it; as there will be teachers of philoſophy, and practitioners in medicine; but it will no longer be the concern of the ſtate. There will be no more *Lord Biſhops*, or *Archbiſhops*, with the titles, and powers, of temporal princes. Every man will provide religion for himſelf; and therefore it will be ſuch as, after due enquiry, and examination, he

ſhall

ſhall think to be founded on truth, and beſt calculated to make men good citizens, good friends, and good neighbours in this world, as well as to fit them for another.

Government, being thus ſimple in its objects, will be unſpeakably leſs *expenſive* than it is at preſent, as well as far more *effectual* in anſwering its proper purpoſe. There will then be little to provide for beſides the adminiſtration of juſtice, or the preſervation of the peace, which it will be the intereſt of every man to attend to, in aid of government.

They are chiefly our vices and follies that lay us under contribution, in the form of the *taxes* we now pay; and they will, of courſe, become ſuperfluous, as the world grows wiſer and better. It is a moſt unreaſonable ſum that we now pay for the ſingle article of *government*. We give, perhaps, the amount of one half of our property, for the ſecure enjoyment of the reſt, which, after all, for want of a good police, is very inſecure.

However, the enormous debts which our preſent ſyſtems of government, and the follies of our governors, have intailed upon us, like all other *evils* in the plan of providence, promiſe to be eventually the cauſe of the greateſt *good*, as neceſſary means of bringing about the happy ſtate of things above deſcribed. And the improvement of Europe may ſerve as an example to the reſt of the world,

and be the inſtrument of other important changes, which I ſhall not dwell upon in this place.

By means of *national debts*, the wheels of ſeveral European governments are already ſo much clogged, that it is impoſſible they ſhould go on much longer. We ſee our taxes, even without war, continually increaſing. The very peace eſtabliſhment of France could not be kept up any longer, and the ſame muſt ſoon be the ſituation of other nations. All the cauſes which have operated to the augmentation of theſe debts, continue to operate, and with increaſed force; ſo that our approach to this *great criſis* of our affairs, is not equable, but accelerated. The preſent generation has ſeen the debt of this nation riſe from a mere trifle to an amount that already threatens ruin. And will not the next generation, if not the preſent, ſee this ruin?

If the preſent change of the French government, brought on, to uſe a phraſe of yours, by *fiſcal difficulties*, has been attended with ſuch an interruption of their manufactures, ſuch a ſtagnation of their commerce, and ſuch a diminution of their current ſpecie, as has greatly added to the difficulties of that country; what are we to expect, from a ſimilar criſis, in *this* country, which depends ſo much more upon manufactures and commerce than France ever did, and which has far leſs reſource within itſelf?

If you, Sir, together with your old or your new friends, can ſteer the ſhip of the ſtate through the ſtorm, which we all ſee to be approaching, you will have more wiſdom and ſteadineſs than has yet been found in any who have hitherto been at the head of our affairs. And if, in theſe circumſtances, you can ſave the *church*, as well as the *ſtate*, you will deſerve no leſs than *canonization*, and ST. EDMUND will be the greateſt name in the calendar. But great occaſions call forth, and in a manner create, great and unknown ability, as we have lately ſeen in the hiſtory of the American revolution. A good providence alſo governs the world, and therefore we need not deſpair.

If the condition of other nations be as much bettered as that of France will probably be, by her improved ſyſtem of government, this great criſis, dreadful as it appears in proſpect, will be *a conſummation devoutly to be wiſhed for*, and though calamitous to many, perhaps to many innocent perſons, will be eventually moſt glorious and happy.

To you, Sir, all this may appear ſuch wild declamation, as your treatiſe appears to me. But ſpeculations of this kind contribute to exhilarate my mind, as the conſideration of the French revolution has contributed to diſturb and diſtreſs yours; and thus is verified the common proverb, which ſays, *One man's meat is another man's poiſon.* If this be

a dream, it is, however, a pleaſing one, and has nothing in it malignant, or unfriendly to any. All that I look to promiſes no excluſive advantage to myſelf, or my friends; but an equal field for every generous exertion to *all*, and it makes the great object of all our exertions to be the public good.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Your very humble ſervant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, Jan. 1, 1791.

F I N I S.

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